Bhagavad-Gītā and The English Romantic Movement

A Study in Influence

K G Srivastava

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To
my wife
Santosh

Abhishek Tiwari

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Note–In respect of words, commonly used in English, the writer has chosen to use their common spellings. For example, the word उपनिषद् has been used as 'Upanishad'. But when specific upanishads are to be mentioned, the spelling 'upaniṣad' has been preferred. Similarly, well-known Indian names have been written in their well-known forms. For example, the name कृष्ण has been written as 'Krishna' and not as 'Kṛṣṇa'.

Preface

The *Bhagavad-Gītā* or *Gītā*, as the work is usually called in and outside India, is the most popular religious text of the Hindus. It has been instrumental in shaping the ethos of the Indian milieu and can be described as containing the very essence of the mind-set of the country. The impact of the book can be discerned not only in the religious life and daily conduct of the Indians but also in the working of their imaginative faculty. Kālidāsa, Bhāravi, Bhavabhūti, Tulsīdāsa, Mīrā, Ghālib, Sri-Aurobindo, 'Prasāda', Tagore, 'Firāque', 'Subrahnymbhāratī', 'Dinakara'—all evince the influence of the *Gītā* in their poetic works. But the impact of this great poem is not confined to India; it is to be found in the great works of most of the modern poets of the world, specially the Western world. Since of all the western countries, Great Britain has had a most intimate relationship with India, British poetry has felt the greatest impact of what Edwin Arnold chose to call 'Song Celestial', especially during the Romantic Age. The influence of the *Gītā* on English poets of the Romantic era—Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey, Keats, Shelley, etc., on the face of it, is a preposterous suggestion. An ordinary student of English literature is most likely to be appalled by the very mention of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* in the context of English romantic poetry. He would accept without any reservations whatsoever that these poets had imbibed the thoughts and images of the *Bible* but the *Gītā*, in their view, has no right to be mentioned in any history of the English Romantic Movement or in a work dealing with the poems by any of these

poets. The present work seeks to remove this fallacy by establishing that the Indian text had played a very major role in kindling the imagination of the English poets of the Romantic Age. It provides documented evidence to prove that all the English romantic poets had read the Hindu scripture and grasped its finer points and used them creatively in their great poems. This observation *prima facie* appears to be baseless or at least quite startling and therefore fairly incredible. But it would cease to be so when attention is drawn to the publication in 1785 in London of the English prose rendering of the Hindu scripture by Charles Wilkins under the aegis of the British East India Company at the recommendation of Warren Hastings, the Governor-General of British India (1774–85) who had felt the need of understanding the spirit of India enshrined in one of its most popular scriptures. In fact Hastings believed that it was imperative for any British ruler of India, aspiring to rule effectively and competently over his Indian subjects. Even if we take 1798 as the date of the Movement's beginnings with the publication of the *Lyrical Ballads*, the joint venture of Wordsworth and Coleridge, the role of the *Gītā* in moulding the thoughts of these two older Romantics cannot be minimized. It was in 1796 when Coleridge, in all likelihood, confronted the Hindu scripture for the first time. (Vide John Drew, *India and the Romantic Imagination*, Oxford University Press, 1987, p. 192, note 31 and p. 193, middle of the page.) Many of the early poems of Coleridge such as 'Religious Musings', 'Ode On The Departing Year' and 'The Eolian Harp' are pervaded by Vedantic thoughts which can be traced to the *Gītā* which he was reading avidly during the years of their composition. The prime piece of the *Lyrical Ballads*, namely, 'Tintern Abbey' by Wordsworth, is Vedantic through and through and has a perceptible impact of the *Gītā* on many of its passages. It must be noted that the famous friendship between Wordsworth and Coleridge had started around 1795. Wordsworth may have learnt of *Gītā*'s philosophy from Coleridge whose knowledge of the Hindu scripture is indisputably borne out by the fact that he quotes a

rather long passage from its eleventh chapter in the version of Wilkins in his philosophical lecture No. III. But it is neither Wordsworth nor Coleridge who is today recognized as the first of the English romantics; that title is attributed now to William Blake who had emerged as a major poet in the eighties of the eighteenth century soon after the publication of Wilkins's *Gītā*. And it is an established fact that Blake was one of the most ardent lovers of the Hindu poem which he had read in Wilkins's version. This is confirmed by his drawing of Charles Wilkins as an Indian Brahmin in the process of translating the *Gītā*; this drawing formed item no. X in the poet's *Descriptive Catalogue* which provides an account of the exhibits that had been displayed in an exhibition of the poet's own drawings organized in London in 1809 with a view to making mystics like Bruno, Jacob Boehme, Swedenborg and the author of the *Gītā* popular in England. Besides Blake, a very significant work of the polemist-Thomas Maurice, namely, *History of Hindostan* in two volumes (1793) that had been read with love and care by almost all the English romantics, especially Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Southey, mentions the *Bhagavad-Gītā* on numerous occasions, quoting passages from it in the English prose version of Wilkins. It should not go unnoticed in any account of the background of the English Romantic Movement; the work had played a very major role in encouraging the British interest in India and its philosophy. A friend and later brother-in-law of Coleridge, Robert Southey, historically regarded as one of the older romantics and in his own day recognized as a very great poet in his own right if we go by the office of the poet-laureate that he had won, refers to the *Bhagavad-Gītā* very prominently in the original preface to his Indian epic called *The Curse of Kehama* (1810) and many a time in the footnotes to the text of the poem. Perhaps, Southey and Coleridge, who were working together during 1795–96, on *The Fall of Robespiere*, had come to know of the *Gītā* almost simultaneously. In any case, the two had read the Hindu scripture very thoroughly and transmitted this knowledge

to their fellow-poets, admirers, and readers through their writings. The measure of the influence of the *Gītā* on the English romantic poets is the fact that even the somewhat sceptical and irreligious poets like Thomas Moore (1779–1852) and Lord Byron (1788–1824) mention it, the former in a footnote to his oriental romance *Lalla Rookh* (1817) and the latter in a footnote to 'The Bride of Abydos' (1813). The younger romantics like Keats and Shelley, although they do not mention the *Gītā* anywhere in their writings so far as I know them, must have known of it through their readings of *The Curse of Kehama* by Southey because Keats's *Endymion* (1818) and Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* (1820) have an undeniable impact of the Indian epic which they had adored in their early youth. It must be placed on record that both of these younger romantics loved India and her traditions from the core of their hearts and had planned to visit her personally with a view to breathing her serene atmosphere. I am sure, when a student of English Romantic Movement comes to know of these facts, which have remained undisclosed so far, s/he will feel inclined to appreciate the significance of the Indian text in the study and understanding of the English Romantic poetry. Their vision will certainly be broadened when he/she would realise that many passages in the great poems by the masters of romanticism were written under the influence of the Indian philosophy enshrined in the *Gītā*.

The present book, thus, seeks to bring into limelight one of the neglected aspects of the English Romantic Movement, namely, its Indian aspects, synthesized in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, the Hindu Bible. True, the subject of the book falls within the scope of what is known as 'Orientalism' which has definitely been recognized as an aspect of English romantic writings but the term has had a pejorative sense, i.e. a tendency among some of the Occidental writers to invoke the spirit of the East in their writings for the sake of exotic effects in a very non-serious fashion as if it were something fantastic and fanciful, not to be taken seriously at all. In most cases, this spirit was invoked by just mentioning high-quality pearls and other

precious gems—lustrous, bright or colourful; it seldom pertained to high philosophical ideas of the East because there had been a belief in the modern West that eastern nations were incapable of lofty metaphysical thoughts. The publication of the English prose version of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* in 1785 in London removed this fallacy of the West once for all and ushered in an Indian Renaissance in England which resulted in a plethora of translations of Sanskrit and other Indian texts such as Kālidāsa's *Abhijnānashākuntalam*, Jayadeva's *Gītagovindam*, Manu's *Mānavadharmashāstra* (*Manusmṛti*), etc., and works on Indian philosophy, culture religion and art by great orientalists like Sir William Jones, H.T. Colebrooke, H.H. Wilson and Francis Wilford, to name only a few names from a long line of brilliant scholars who had discovered the hidden wealth of Indian wisdom and made it available to the West. Wilkins's translation of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* was the first step on this staircase of British endeavour to understand the true spirit of India. Thus the present work aims at measuring the extent to which the imaginative mind of England profited from the first fruit of ancient Indian wisdom that had been plucked by a British Indophile. It is, therefore, a study of how and to what extent the creative mind of England had utilized Indian thoughts, ideas and images, gathered from the first crop of the Indological learning cultivated by Charles Wilkins. In this way, it is not a study of Orientalism inherent in the English Romantic Movement but rather of the significant Indological influence on that great movement of the human spirit.

India's relationship with the growth of English literature has not remained completely neglected. In the early part of the preceding century an English scholar Sencourt had come out with an excellent work entitled *India In English Literature*, demonstrating the occurrence of India in Western literature right from the times of Aeschylus to his own day, with special reference to its occurrence in English literature beginning with the age of King Alfred, '9th century' (871–99 AD). S. Radhakrishnan's *Eastern Religions and Western Thoughts*

is also to be mentioned as a very significant study, highlighting the role of India's religious and philosophical ideas in shaping the destiny of Western thought. A great expert on Chaucer, F.N. Robinson in his edition of *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, had no inhibition in asserting India to be the ultimate source for the tales of the Franklin, the Pardoner and the Shipman. But *India and the Romantic Imagination* by John Drew is a really illuminating work for the students of English literature; it acknowledges India's contribution to the enrichment of English Romantic poetry, specially with regards to two very great poems—one by S.T. Coleridge and the other by P.B. Shelley, the poems being 'Kubla Khan' and the *Prometheus Unbound*. However, John Drew did not dwell on the role of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* in kindling the romantic imagination in England. Eric Sharpe, who has done a lot of work on the history of the *Gītā*'s reception in the West, sadly enough, failed to take account of the impact created by the Hindu scripture on the English romantics in his otherwise brilliant book entitled *The Universal Gita* (1986) where one expected a comprehensive treatment of the subject of the present book. Raymond Schwab's *La Renaissance Orientale* (Paris, 1950) also fails miserably to track the influence of the *Gītā* on the poetry of Wordsworth, Coleridge and their group. Same is the case with the works of V. de Sola Pinto, Garland Cannon, S.R. Swaminathan and even with the excellent work of Edward W. Said called *Orientalism* (1978) who makes a very casual reference to the *Bhagavad-Gītā* in his much-discussed book, despite his wide reading and great mass of information, Said's treatment of the connection of the English Romantic Movement with India leaves much to be desired. The present work seeks to establish that the English romantics were, by and large, enamoured of Indian culture, religion and philosophy as revealed in the Sanskrit texts that had been available to them in their English translations, specially the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. This fascination for India is quite evident from the fact that almost all the romantics had an ardent desire of visiting India, which they had come

to believe to have been the place of the origin of the human race and therefore an object of veneration. This book, as has been said earlier, demonstrates with commensurate evidence that all the English romantics had a deep love for India and her traditions and had read India's most popular scripture, namely, the *Bhagavad-Gītā* in the English translation of Wilkins with care. It devotes separate chapters to the major romantics—Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey, Shelley and Keats and discusses the thoughts of the *Gītā* used by these poets in their writings as cogently as possible. Quotations from the Hindu scripture are first given in their original Sanskrit version in the *Devanāgarī* script followed by their transliterations in Roman script; each quotation is invariably accompanied by the version rendered by Wilkins which the poet concerned had read. This should enable the readers to appreciate the affinity between the English poem on the one hand and the concerned passages from the *Gītā* on the other in a fair and impartial manner and decide for themselves whether the English passage has the imprint of the Sanskrit passage.

For those who have any doubts regarding the British fascination with India and the Indian condition, I would like to quote the last passage of the first part of the 'Pleasures of Hope' by Thomas Campbell (1777–1844) which was published for the first time on 27 April 1799 and which was highly admired by the French woman-of-letters—Madame de Stäel (1766–1817). Criticisizing the English exploitation of India at the hands of the East India Company, the poet envisions just punishment to the culprits by Brahma in his tenth Avatāra:

> Foes of mankind (her guardian spirits say)
> Revolving ages bring the bitter day,
> When Heaven's unerring arm shall fall on you
> And blood for blood these Indian plains bedew;
> Nine times have Brama's wheels of lightning hurl'd
> His awful presence o'er the alarmed world;
> Nine times hath Guilt, through all his giant frame,
> Convulsive tree bled, as the Mighty came;

Nine times hath suffering Mercy spared in vain—
But Heaven shall burst her starry gates again
He comes! dread Brama shakes the sunless sky
With murmuring wrath, and thunders from on high,
Heaven's fiery horse, beneath his warrior form
Paws the light clouds, and gallops on the storm
Wide waves his flickering sword; his bright arms glow
Like summer suns, and light the world below
Earth, and her trembling isles in Ocean's bed
Are shook; and Nature rocks beneath her tread.

The poem ends with the following vision of Kalki Avatāra who will put an end to the oppressive rule of the British in India:

To pour redress on India's injured realm
The oppressor to dethrone, the proud to whelm;
To chase destruction from her plundered shore.
With arts and arms that triumphed once before,
The tenth Avatar comes! at Heaven's command
Shall Seriswattee wave her hallow'd wand
And Camdeo bright, and Ganesa sublime
Shall bless with joy their own propitious clime
Come, Heavenly Powers primeval peace restore
Love!—Mercy!—Wisdom! rule for evermore.

It would not be out of place to mention here that 'The Pleasures of Hope' was a very popular poem of its times; many of its lines had assumed the status of proverbs and were quoted frequently by its native readers—lines such as 'Tis distance lends enchantment to the view'. Clearly, the native readers of the poem found no difficulty in enjoying the passages quoted above, full of Indian thoughts, allusions, and myths. This was indeed the result of the intellectual climate of England which had been created by the Indian Renaissance in that country in the wake of the English translations of ancient Indian texts such as the *Gītā*, *Ritusamhāra*, *Manusmṛti*, *Abhijnānashākuntalam* and *Hitopadesha*—all of which were read and enjoyed by the reading public of the times, always

eager to receive newer and newer classics of India, being made available to it by the orientalists. This being the case, there should be no surprise to find the Yoga philosophy, couched in a patently Hindu terms, articulated by Wordsworth in a poem like 'Tintern Abbey' where the English poet affirms:

> Nor less, I trust,
> To them I may have owed another gift,
> Of aspect more sublime; that blessed mood,
> In which the burthen of the mystery,
> In which the heavy and the weary weight
> Of all this unintelligible world,
> Is lightened: that serene and blessed mood,
> In which the affections gently lead us on,—
> Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
> And even the motion of our human blood
> Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
> In body, and become a living soul:
> While with an eye made quiet by the power
> Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
> We see into the life of things.

Any sensitive reader, familiar with the yogic texts, would instantly say that the passage describes very vividly what happens to the mind in a state of what Hindus call 'Samādhi', beautifully depicted in the sixth chapter of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* , especially in verses 28-29. If Wordsworth is being really quite sincere and is expressing an authentic experience here, he has become what the Sanskrit text calls 'Samadarshī'; what the Sanskrit term truly means Wordsworth suggests by the last line of the quotation, namely, 'We see into the life of things.' Similarly, when Shelley sings the 52nd stanza of his pastoral elegy *Adonais*:

> The One remains, the many change and pass;
> Heaven's light forever shines, Earth's shadows fly;
> Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
> Stains the white radiance of Eternity,
> Until Death tramples it to fragments...

we might quite legitimately claim that here the poet could be giving a poetic expression to the famous creed of the Advaita-Vedānta school of Hindu philosophy, namely, 'Brahma satyam, jaganmithyā' (God is real, the world is mere illusion). Western scholars choose to characterize the underlying thought of the passage as Neo-Platonic, but they forget the fact that the founder of that school of Western philosophy—Plotinus (AD 205–70) is reported to have tried to come to India and had definitely come to Iran in search of Indian wisdom; in any case, his *Enneads* is coloured by *Upanishadic* thinking. And even the Platonic system of thought is very close to that of the *Upanishads* and is likely to have been influenced by the latter via Pythagoras (c. 580–c. 500 BC). The chapter entitled 'India in the Ancient Intellectual Tradition of the West' has been written with a view to affirming the fact that the thoughts that the Western scholars designate as Platonic or Neo-Platonic or Pythogorean could be notions essentially influenced by Hindu philosophy. These thoughts had become part and parcel of Western philosophy in due course of time. Prior to the Romantic age these thoughts were available to the English men of letters through the works of Plato and Plotinus but by the onset of the Romantic Movement the actual words of the Indian sages had arrived in England in the native language of the people there. Thus since the romantic poets in England were aware of the works of the great orientalists such as Wilkins and Jones and of course of Thomas Maurice, it is safe to identify Hindu thoughts in their poems.

I seize this opportunity of placing on record my heartfelt gratitude to various persons and institutions for the help rendered in bringing the present work to a logical and satisfactory conclusion. First of all I would like to thank Professor Philip Hobsbaum of the English Department of the University of Glasgow who has been very kind to me since my days spent at that great University during the academic session of 1973-74 as a British Council scholar and who took all the trouble of procuring for me a photocopy of a very old and

rare article entitled 'Catalogue of the Rydal Mount Library' from Cambridge; I can never forget this noble gesture of his. I am also thankful to the famous Shakespeare scholar—late Professor Wilson Knight who had generated a sense of self-confidence in me by praising the originality of my interpretation of 'Ode to a Nightingale' in a four-page critique of my paper. I am especially grateful to Professor P.H. Butter and Dr Eva Schaper of the University of Glasgow for their words of praise and encouragement showered on me during my Glasgow days which have stood me in good stead during the preparation for the present book. Professor Leon Golden of the Florida State University has been almost parental to me; his inspiring letters from time to time have provided me an emotional and intellectual support. I can never thank him adequately for all that he did for me on numerous occasions. Professor Amaresh Dutta and late Professor Shivadhar Singh of Guwahati and Jaunpur respectively were very eager for the completion of the present study; the former must be immensely delighted to see my work in its present shape and the latter's soul which is lying in the lap of Parambrahm would definitely gain a sense of satisfaction from his humble student's tribute in the form of the present book which was after his own heart. For the members of the staff of National Library, Calcutta (now Kolkata), Central Secretariat Library, Shastri Bhawan, New Delhi, and Allahabad University Library, Allahabad, I have the highest regard for their eagerness to help me with books and journals. To my wife and to my mother I acknowledge my deep gratitude for their love and affection shown to me during the preparation of this book, specially to the former who kept on goading me to bring the book to its logical end. To my sons and daughters-in-law and grandson I am grateful for their continued interest in my work from its beginning to its end. My most sincere thanks are due to Macmillan India Ltd., for their publication of the book; I am specially indebted to Mr Raghu Ramakrishnan, Vice-President, Macmillan India Ltd., Calcutta, and to Maitreyee Chatterji, his editor, both of whom have made

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Contents

	Preface	vii–xviii
1	The *Bhagavad-Gītā* and its Main Thoughts	1–38
2	India in the Ancient Intellectual Tradition of the West	39–112
3	English Exploration of Indian Traditions: A Short-History	113–135
4	William Blake and the *Bhagavad-Gītā*	136–157
5	A New Look at Wordsworth's 'Immortality Ode': A Hindu View	158–197
6	Coleridge and the *Bhagavad-Gītā*	198–252
7	Robert Southey and the *Bhagavad-Gītā*	253–276
8	Some Aspects of India in the Poetry of P.B. Shelley	277–306
9	India and Indian Thought in the Poetry of John Keats with Special Reference to the *Bhagavad-Gītā*	307–335
	Conclusion	336–338
	A Select Bibliography	339–347
	Key to the Pronunciation of Sanskrit Words	348
	Index	349–377

Abhishek Tiwari

The Bhagavad-Gītā and its Main Thoughts

The *Bhagavad-Gītā* or *Song Celestial*, as Sir Edwin Arnold called it,[1] is, in all probability, the most popular of the Hindu scriptures. With Bādarāyana's *Brahma-Sūtra* and the *Upanishads* it forms what is known as *prasthānatrayī* or the 3 resting places of the Vedānta philosophy, constituting the essence of Hinduism. The great sage and seer Ādi Shankarāchārya himself says in his 'Introduction' to his commentary on the *Bhagavad-Gītā*: 'This famous *Gītāśāstra* is an epitome of the essentials of the whole Vedic teaching. A knowledge of its teaching leads to the realization of all human aspirations.'[2] The well-known verse from the *Vaiṣṇavīya Tantrasāra* clearly states that the *Gītā* contains the essence of the Upanishadic philosophy:

सर्वोपनिषदो गावो दोग्धा गोपालनन्दनः।
पार्थो वत्सः सुधीर्भोक्ता दुग्धं गीतामृतं महत्।।

sarvopanishado gāvo dogdhā gopālanandanaḥ
pārtho vatsaḥ sudhīr bhoktā dugdham Gītāmṛtam mahat.

(All the Upanishads are the cows and the cowherd's son, Krishna, is the milker; Arjuna is the calf, the wise man is the drinker and the nectar-like *Gītā* is the excellent milk.)

Crores of Hindus down the ages, for centuries, have been deriving comfort from this great poem. The noblest son

of modern India—Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, articulated the feelings of the vast majority of the Hindus when he declared:[3]

> I find a solace in the Bhagavad-Gītā that I miss even in the sermon on the Mount. When disappointment stares me in the face and all alone I see not one ray of light, I go back to the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. I find a verse here and a verse there and I immediately begin to smile in the midst of overwhelming tragedies—my life has been full of external tragedies—and if they have left no visible, no indeliable scar on me, I owe it all to the teachings of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*.

The significance of this sacred text of the Hindus can be very well realized from the fact that when the Muslims came to India and learnt her culture a bit clearly, the greatest representative of their intelligence of the times—Al-Biruni (AD 973–1048), whose full name was Abu-Rihan Muhammad and who had come to India with Mahmud Ghazni and was the greatest link between the East and the West during the Middle Ages, felt attracted towards the *Bhagavad-Gītā* and translated into Arabic with Arabic transliteration a large portion of the Sanskrit text, covering 4 pages of his *Tahkik-i-Hind*. This was done in the year AD 1030. Similarly, when the Europeans came into a true intellectual contact with India during the time of Governor General Warren Hastings at the close of the eighteenth century, the first Sanskrit text chosen by Charles Wilkins—for being translated into a European language, was no doubt the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. Charles Wilkins (later Sir Charles Wilkins) has the credit of having made this wonderful Sanskrit scripture available to the Europeans in 1785 in an English prose rendering along with ample notes; the rendering had been done directly from the Sanskrit original and not via Persian or Arabic. This translation of the work into English proved to be a revelation, for through it the scientific West came into a direct intellectual contact with the mystical-philosophical East. And once it

reached the hands of the Western scholars, it wrested from them the highest possible tribute that it so richly deserved. In his Latin translation of the work, the translator—Friedrich von Sclegel (1772–1829), the younger brother of August Wilhelm von Schlegel (1767–1855), one of the earliest and most significant German Romatic writers and critics, waxed lyrical in his admiration of the author of the Gītā, Krishna Dvaipāyana Vyāsa, whom he apostrophized in the following words:

> O thou venerable first of poets, interpreter of the numinous, whatever be thy name among mortals, O author of this song whose maxims transport the spirit to the ethereal and divine heights of an inexpressible felicity, I incline myself profoundly before thee in one everlasting adoration for thy sacred words.[4]

The eminent German statesman and philologist, Baron von Karl Wilhelm Humbolt (1767–1835) pronounced it 'the most beautiful, perhaps the only true, philosophical song in any known tongue... perhaps the deepest and loftiest thing the world has to show.'[5] And the official exponent of 'the German faith', J.W. Hauer, a Sanskrit scholar who served for some years as a missionary in India, gives the *Bhagavad-Gītā* a central place in the German faith. He called it 'a work of imperishable significance' and declared that the work 'gives us not only profound insights that are valid for all times and for all religious life, but it contains as well the classical presentation of one of the most significant phases of Indo-Germanic religious history.... It shows us the way as regards the essential nature and basal characteristic of Indo-Germanic religion. Here, Spirit is at work that belongs to our spirit.'[6] He stated the central message of the *Gītā* in the following words:

> We are not called to solve the meaning of life but to find out the deed demanded of us and to work and so, by action, to master the riddle of life.[7]

And when moving out of the continent of Europe, Wilkins's *Gītā* crossed the Atlantic ocean and reached the United States of America, the Hindu scripture found its most sympathetic and appreciative response from the transcendentalists of New England like Emerson and Thoreau. Addressing H.G.O. Blake, the literary executioner of Thoreau as 'my friend', Waldo Emerson (1803–82) wrote in his famous 'Journal':

> I owed, my friend, and owed a magnificent day to the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. It was the first of books; it was as if an empire spoke to us, nothing small or unworthy, but large, serene, consistent, the voice of old intelligence which in another age and climate had pondered and thus disposed of—the same questions which exercise us.[8]

Henry David Thoreau (1817–62), American naturalist and writer and Emerson's bosom friend, called the philosophy of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* 'stupendous and cosmogonal' in comparison with which 'our modern world and its literature seem puny and trivial.' Describing his experience with the Hindu scripture, he remarked:[9]

> Thus it appears that the sweltering inhabitants of Charleston and New Orleans, of Madras and Bombay and Calcutta, drink at my well. In the morning I bathe my intellect in the stupendous and cosmogonal philosophy of the *Bhawat-Geeta*, since whose composition years of the gods have elapsed, and in comparison with which our modern world and its literature seem puny and trivial; and I doubt if that philosophy is not to be referred to a previous state of existence, so remote is its sublimity from our conceptions. I lay down the book and go to my well for water, and lo! there I meet the servant of the Brahmin, priest of Brahma and Vishnu and Indra, who still sits in his temple on the Ganges reading the *Vedas*, or dwells at the fort of a tree with his crust and water jug. I meet his servant come to draw water for

> his master, and our buckets, as it were, grate together in the same well. The pure Walden water is mingled with the sacred water of the Ganges.

Among the early admirers of the *Gītā* in the West may be added the name of Victor Cousins who masterfully summarized its message in his lectures on philosophy delivered at the University of Paris in 1841. Later T.A. Ribot, the French psychologist, said in *La Revue Philosophique* in 1894:[10]

> Its philosophy is not that of discursive reflection and implies views which should be systematized by a knowledge of mysticism and of intuitive penetration. To see in the *Gītā* other specific developments of thought would be an inadequate method for its exposition. Its teaching should be considered more as alluding to degrees of realization of the *Self* as they have been recommended in the various schools of asceticism, as inculcated by different mystical disciplines rather than as seeking any logical consistency or even dialectical penetration.

Paul Hubert has narrated the story of the rapid popularity gained by the *Bhagavad-Gītā* in a brochure under the title *Histoire de la Bhagavadgītā*. This brochure places on record how the reputation of the *Gītā* spread throughout the world after its first translation into English in the year 1785. In his study in Paris, Hubert had laid around himself as many as 132 different editions of the Hindu text in various languages of the world—English, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Dutch, Polish, Swedish, Czech, Russian, Hungarian, Esperanto, etc. This was the case in 1941. But now there is no country in the world which has not got a translation of the *Gītā* in its own language—so wide and pervasive has the reputation of the Hindu text grown. There are at present more than 20,000 different translations in more than 75 different languages of the world. However, on this point the words of Swami Chidbhavananda are worth quoting:[11]

> The popularity or usefulness of a book is not to be judged by the number of languages into which it is

translated. The one solitary book that has been rendered into almost all the languages of the world is the *Holy Bible*. But an achievement of this type need not in itself be a hallmark of divine perfection. Political power, missionary zeal and material resources are factors capable of creating popularity for anything under the sun, not to speak of a book like the *Holy Bible*. Christendom has had the benefit of all these three simultaneously. But the position of the *BG* is different. The propagators of this book have never exploited extraneous power for their purpose. The translators of this book were actuated by the noble urge that the great ideals contained in it were highly beneficial to humanity.

The work entitled *Bhagavadgītānuvāda* (Satya Bharati Publication, Ranchi, 1983) by Winand M. Callewaert and Shilanand Hemraj, provides a very good account of the various translations along with that of the numerous commentaries and research-articles on the *Gītā*, published in various magazines and journals of the world. And Eric J. Sharpe in his excellent work called *The Universal Gītā* (General Duckworth & Co. Ltd., London, 1985) supplies a historical survey of the reception of the Hindu text in the West in a very coherent and systematic manner.

The Date of the Composition of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* and the Question of its Authorship

Though the *Gītā* has existed in India and abroad in its capacity as an independent self-contained text, the fact of the matter is that it is actually an integral part of India's most famous ancient epic poem, the *Mahābhārata*. Its 18 chapters form Chapters XXIII to XL of the epic's section entitled *Bhīṣmaparva*. And the epic as a whole has been traditionally attributed to the sage Krishna Dvaipāyana Vyāsa, son of the sage Parāśara, author of a moral code (Smṛti) known after his name. Vyāsa was the product of the union between Parāśara and a fisherwoman, Satyavatī, before the

latter's marriage with Śantanu, king of Hastināpura. Since he was black in complexion and had been brought up by Satyavatī on an island, he was called Krishnadvaipāyana; later he was called Vyāsa because he compiled the *Vedas* in their present form. Apart from the *Mahābhārata*, he composed all the 18 Purāṇas and the philosophical treatise called *Brahma-Sūtra* or *Śārīrikasūtra*. He is also known as Vādarāyaṇa or Bādarāyaṇa. He was the father, through a then socially recognized system called *niyoga*, of Dhṛtarāṣtra, Pāndu and Vidura. Thus, he was a senior contemporary of the heroes of the great war described in the *Mahābhārata* like Krishna, Arjun, Bhima and Bhishma. And since the epic was composed by Vyāsa himself, the age of the *Mahābhārata* as well as of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* which is only a part of it, is the *Dvāpara-yuga*, an age which came to an end some 3,100 years before the commencement of the Christian era. This means that the *Gītā* was written more than 5,000 years ago. However, Western scholarship is not prepared to assign such a remote date of composition to the *Mahābhārata* or to the *Gītā*, in its considered view, the *Gītā* even in its original and much shorter form than the present one, could not have been written before 200 BC. Some efforts were made in the nineteenth century to prove that the Hindu scripture was written under the impact of the *New Testament* of the *Holy Bible* whose main doctrines had reached India as early as the third century of the Christian era. A Victorian scholar Dr Lorinser tried to argue that there were several traces of the impact of the *New Testament* on the *Bhagavad-Gītā* which could never have attained the sublimity of thought that it has, without the former, i.e. the *New Testament*.[12] That this was the real aim of the Victorian researches of this type becomes very clear from the following statement of a Victorian translater of the *Gītā*, John Davies:[13]

> It may be certainly affirmed that if any one, after reading the *Purāṇas* or other popular religious books of the Hindus, should then turn for the first tme to the study of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, he must be conscious of

having come to a new country where nearly everything is changed.

But what about the sublimity of thought of the *Rāmāyana* of Vālmīki, certainly a very popular religious book? Davies seems to have blissfully ignored it as he chose to ignore the *Upanishads* and their sublime metaphysics. Moreover, there is a clear fallacy in his argument; if the sublimity of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*'s thought is due to the introduction of the *New Testament* into the scholarly and creative circles of India in the third century of the Christian era—the sublimity of thought that is missing from the *Purāṇas*, it follows that the *Purāṇas* had all been written much before the introduction of Christianity in India in the third century. But the Western scholarship is of the firm view that they were written in the sixth or seventh century AD and some of them were written during the Middle Ages, i.e. in the twelfth or thirteenth century. The fact of the matter is that the entire thinking of scholars like Dr Lorinser and Davies was vitiated and muddled owing to political considerations; their sole objective was to prove the intellectual and ideological inferiority of India, then the colony of the British people; these prejudiced scholars were not prepared to concede to India, their subject nation, any intellectual superiority whatsoever. A comparatively impartial historian, Professor Macdonnel, can be cited here to disprove the theory of Davies and Lorinser. Macdonnel was quite confident that the *Mahābhārata* had assumed its present form with all the interpolations before the birth of Christ. He observed very candidly:[14]

> The stages by which the epic (i.e. the *Mahābhārata*) developed from its original germ till it reached its final encyclopaedic form are matter of conjecture. It is, however, not improbable that it had assumed the character of a didactic compendium before the beginning of our era.

'But precisely when?' will remain, in all probability, unanswered. However, a suggestion put forward by Charles

Wilkins, the first European translator of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, which has hitherto remained unnoticed and even completely ignored, will be, I am pretty sure, very helpful in proving the 'ancientness' of the Hindu scripture. Wilkins calls to our attention the fact that contrary to the popular Hindu view regarding the total number of the Vedas, the *Gītā* consistently maintains their trinity as against their supposed quartret-character, usualy believed in by the genarality of the Hindu masses. This fact, in the considered view of the English Orientalist, goes to prove the great antiquity of the *Gītā* which must have been written, Wilkins infers, in an age when the fourth Veda known as the *Atharvaveda* had not been recognized or written or included in the Vedic canon.[15] And it cannot be easily ascertained as to when the quaternary canon of the Vedas came into being. However, the fact remains that the *Atharvaveda*, itself came to be recognized as a genuine Veda several centuries before the Christian era.

And yet another fact which goes to prove the remote antiquity of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* must be put on record here. This fact is that in its tenth chapter called 'Vibhūtiyoga', the *Gītā* refers to certain personages who were living presences in its day; today, they are just names, but in the times of the *Gītā* they must have been great living names in the memory of the public. Nārada, Devala, Marīci, Kapila, Vyāsa and above all Uśanā. In the thirty-seventh verse, the Lord declares that of the poets He is Uśanā, the poet. This verse is of special significance. Uśanā is usually identified with Śukrāchārya, noted today for his ethical code called *Śukranīti*. But the Lord mentions Uśanā as a poet, full of divine wisdom. Clearly, this Uśanā is the one whom the sage Vamadeva recalled in the *Ṛgveda*, IV 26 as 'the wise Uśanā'. It appears that Uśanā's poetic works, full of divine wisdom, were quite well-known to the common man in the age when the *Gītā* had been composed and were subsequently lost. This fact should go a long way in establishing the remote antiquity of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*.

If we agree that the *Gītā* was written before the *Athar-*

vaveda came to be recognized as the fourth Veda, we can de-
cide to a large extent quite precisely the age of the
comosition of the Hindu scripture. For, about the age of the
Atharvaveda Professor Macdonnel has this much to say:[16]

> For a considerable time these three Vedas (Ṛka, Yajus, and Sāman) alone were recognized as canonical scriptures, being in the next literary phase described as the 'three-fold knowledge' (trayīvidyā, Pali tevijja). The *Atharvaveda* came to be recognized as canonical only a good deal later than the other three; it is similar in form to the Ṛgveda, from which many of its hymns are taken; but the evidence both of its language and of its matter show that it was formed into a collection subsequently to the Ṛgveda.

The learned Vedic scholar further states:[17]

> Linguistically, the *Atharvaveda* is decidedly later than the Ṛgveda, but earlier than the Brāhmaṇas.

If the Brāhmaṇas had been composed around 900 BC, as Macdonell believes, then the *Atharvaveda* must have been composed around 900 BC and the *Gītā* must have been written a little earlier than 900 BC when only the 3 Vedas were recognized. This is the period of the composition of the great Upanishads and the *Bhagavad-Gītā* is an Upanishad as it itself claims to be. It is, perhaps, a late Upanishad, probably a little later than the *Śvetāśvataropaniṣhad*.

Bhagavad-Gītā: The Argument

As stated earlier, the *Bhagavad-Gītā* is an integral part of the *Mahābhārata*, forming chapters 23 to 40 of its 'Bhīṣma-parva', though it can be treated as a self-contained unit in itself. It is in 18 chapters running into nearly 700 verses. It is in the form of a dialogue, mainly between Krishna and Arjuna, before the commencement of the war between Pandavas and Kauravas. Since the *Mahābhārata* is the largest and the grandest epic poem in the world, each of its episodes

is on a very large scale. The *Bhagavad-Gītā* is only one of the most significant episodes of the epic and naturally, therefore, it is on a very large scale. It contains Lord Krishna's teachings to Arjuna, delivered to the latter when he found himself on the horns of a great dilemma regarding his participation in the war: how to fight against his own men—his grandfather, his teacher, and his own near and dear ones? Those who question how Krishna took 18 chapters in the midst of a war to convince Arjuna of the imperativeness of his duty as a true kṣatriya or warrior, forget the fact that a grand epic requires such a crucial episode to be of the length that it is. Let us now try to provide a chapter-wise faithful gist of the work before we pinpoint the major thoughts that emerge from the gist itself.

Chapter I

This chapter is entitled 'Arjuna-Viṣādayoga' because it describes the hesitation and despondency of Arjuna when faced with his great dilemma. The blind king Dhṛtarāṣṭra, uncle of the Pandavas, father of the Kauravas and ruler of Hastināpura, asks his charioteer Sanjaya, divinely gifted with superhuman vision to narrate to him what happened between the two armies of the Kauravas on the one hand and of the Pandavas on the other. Sanjaya tells him that when the two armies got arrayed and conch-shells had been blown to denote the commencement of the fight, Arjuna expressed to his charioteer (Lord Krishna) his wish to have a clear look at the people collected on the battlefield of Kurukṣetra and that when he witnesses that the soldiers on either side are his relatives and friends, he shudders at the very thought of war among the kinsmen. The grief-stricken Arjuna decides to give up the idea of war altogether when Lord Krishna intervenes to bring Arjuna round to the idea of the righteous war that he has decided to wage. Hence onwards, the work called *Bhagavad-Gītā* is devoted to the exposition of the philosophy of duty that Lord Krishna enunciates with a view to convincing Arjuna of the necessity of war in the given circumstances.

This naturally takes the form of a dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna in which the doubts raised by the latter in regard to the former's philosophy are removed by Krishna.

Chapter II

This chapter is entitled 'Sāṁkhya Yoga' as it dwells on the true knowledge (*Sāṁkhya*) regarding the perishability of the body and the imperishability of the soul. (The name of each chapter of the *Gītā* ends with the term *'Yoga'* which here means discourse or discussion.) In this section of the work, Sanjaya tells Dhṛtarāṣtra that when Lord Krishna saw Arjuna in an extremely despondant mood, trying to give up the thought of waging the war completely. He first rebuked him and then exhorted him to fight for a righteous cause and thereby perform his duty in the true spirit of a Kṣatriya prince. But when Arjuna remained adament on non-participation in the war because it involved the killing of one's own near and dear ones, worthy of love and regard rather than of violence, the Lord smiled and said that man should not grieve for what is perishable. He explained his statement by saying that it is the body that perishes and never the soul which is eternal, changeless, immutable and indestructible. He affirmed that one who thinks that the soul slays and one who thinks that it (i.e. the soul) is slain, both fail to perceive the truth; for the soul neither slays nor is slain. The fact of the matter is that the soul is unmanifest, unthinkable and unchanging. The soul which is a dweller in the body of everyone, is eternal and can never be slain. Thus, there is no scope for grieving for any person whosoever he or she may be. The Lord also calls Arjuna's attention to his *svadharma* (i.e. duty assigned to his class; there exists no greater good for a kṣatriya than a battle enjoined by duty). In case Arjuna shuns his duty by escaping from the war, he is sure to earn dishonour for himself; but on the other hand, by doing his prescribed duty of fighting a righteous war even if he dies, he is certain of going to *Svarga*, the dwelling place of the gods, straightway. Thus, on both counts (i.e. the soul's immor-

tality and the imperativeness of his prescribed duty) Arjuna must fight like a brave soldier. This is so far as *Sāmkhya* or path of true knowledge dictates. The path of *Yoga* (i.e. *Karma-Yoga*) also leads to the same conclusion. According to it, one should do one's duty in the name of God Almighty without any thought of reward or fruit, in a spirit of total disinterestedness, freed from all delusions, caused by the study of the Vedas which bewilders the people unnecessarily by means of their ritualistic cults which guarantee temporary stay in the kingdom of the gods. But Arjuna should concentrate on one sole object (i.e. God) by doing his prescribed duty without being affected by joy or sorrow, pleasure or pain, living evenly in all conditions by achieving *sthitaprajnatā* or *brahmaniṣthatā*, the state of mind in which the doer of an act abandons all desires and acts without any sense of egotism, leaving everything to God's mercy.

Chapter III

This chapter has been named 'Karmayoga': it is a discourse about right action. To Krishna's suggestion of work without any thought of fruit or reward attached to it, Arjuna poses the question of why one should do work at all. The Lord replies to Arjuna's query by saying that not by mere renunciation does one attain perfection but by being in harmony with the Cosmos, delighting in the Self or Universal Spirit alone and doing one's duty for the maintenance of the world-order in the spirit of King Janaka. Action has a binding effect in regard to the cycle of birth and death if it is done with some selfish interest in view. So, one who wants to avoid this cycle of births and deaths ought to do selfless and God-oriented work, unaffected by the 3 *guṇas* or modes or Nature which are the root cause of *saṁsāra* or cycle of births and deaths. The Lord strongly warns Arjuna against the 2 enemies of mankind, namely, *kāma* (craving or desire) and *krodha* (anger); these 2 compel man to do sinful acts, resulting in his enslavement by the snare of the 3 *guṇas* or modes of *prakṛti* (Nature); they are one and the same born of

the mode called passion (*rajoguṇa*). It is *kāma* that destroys man's *jnāna* (wisdom) and *vijnāna* (discrimination) both. So, man should conquer *kāma* by controlling the senses from the very beginning, knowing full-well that senses are powerful; but more powerful than the senses is *manas* or the mind and more powerful than the mind is intelligence but far more powerful than even intelligence is ('Saḥ') *ātman* or Self. Arjuna should, therefore, conquer this enemy in the form of *kāma* by bringing his self in harmony with the Universal Self and forgetting completely his egoistic sense, his *ahaṁkāra*.

Chapter IV

This chapter has been designated as 'Jnānakarmayoga' because it is a discourse about the path of action through knowledge. To His own firm suggestion made at the close of the previous chapter that *kāma* or desire is the main factor, responsible for man's enslavement by *prakṛti* or *māyā*, the Lord proposes a method of overcoming that arch-enemy. This method is the age-old method called knowledge-oriented Karmayoga; the Lord had explained this method at the beginning of the present creation to Vivasvān (the sun-god) who later elucidated it to Manu, who in his turn explicated it to Ikṣvāku. However, this got lost to the world through the lapse of time and the Lord says He is only reviving the long-lost path for the sake of Arjuna, His friend and ardent devotee. This assertion of the Lord surprises Arjuna and he wants the Lord to clarify the puzzling statement for he is at a loss to understand how the Lord could have explained the doctrine to Vivasvān at the beginning of the present creation when He is living in the Dvāpara age after the lapse of millions of human years. Krishna dispels Arjuna's doubt regarding the veracity of His statement by telling him that whenever there is religious decline, He descends on the earth, having full control over Nature without being subject to the theory of karma, by dint of His *māyā* or *yogamāyā* (i.e. his own Energy) for the well-being of the righteous and the destruction of the vicious, age after age. Those who realize truly the mys-

tery of the divine birth of the Lord get liberation from the cycle of births and deaths by emulating the example of the Lord (i.e. by doing their allotted work without any attachment whatsoever). Thus, the main principle of truly perfect living is action without attachment. But what is a true action? The Lord tells Arjuna that true action is one which the doer does in the name of God without any thought or desire for fruits. Thus, the desirelessness or non-attachment of action and doing faithfully all work as an offering to God are the 2 constituents of true action, leading to the realization of God and liberation from the cycle of births and deaths.

Chapter V

Arjuna feels confused by the principles propounded in the previous chapter because these principles seem to be contradictory since they preach at once renunciation and action. So he wants the Lord to tell him in which of the two lies man's peace and well-being. The Lord enlightens him on the essential identity of the two apparently opposed systems. This is why the chapter has been entitled 'Karmasaṁnyāsayoga' in which 'karma' or action has been described as *saṁnyāsa* or renunciation. Krishna says that it is childish to speak of *sāṁkhya* or *saṁnyāsa* or knowledge and *yoga* or *karmayoga* or the principle of action as two different things; in point of fact, they are basically one and the same thing. A true worker is also a true renouncer since he is beyond dualities of all sorts, loathing nothing, desiring nothing. But the path of knowledge or renunciation is very difficult whereas that of action or *karmayoga* is comparatively easy. He who is trained in the way of work and is pure of heart, master of his self through the conquest of the senses, and whose soul has become the self of all beings, is never tainted by works whatever their nature. Such a person realizes that whatever he does is actually being done by his body and not by his self which is none other than God. He who works, having given up attachment, resigning his actions to God, is not touched by sin in the same way as a lotus leaf remains untouched by water though it resides in it.

Such a person is never affected by an excitement or agitation, joy or sorrow; he is neither pleased nor displeased because he is united all the time with the Universal Spirit even while he is living in the world.

Chapter VI

This chapter has been designated as 'Ātmasaṁyamayoga' or God Realization Through Self-Restraint. In continuation to what the Lord observed in the preceding chapter, He explains in the present chapter the nature of the true servant of God. According to him, one who does his allotted work without aspiring after its fruits, is a true *yogin* as well as a true *saṁnyāsin*. This is contrary to the popular view that a *saṁnyāsin* is one who does not kindle the sacrificial fire or one who performs no rites or rituals. Clearly, *saṁnyāsa* or renunciation has little to do with outward work. It is rather an inward attitude. *Saṁnyāsa* and *yoga* are complementary to each other for no one who has not renounced his selfish purpose in his work can become a *yogin*. Work, in fact, is a means to attaining union with God which is known as *yoga*. When one does not get attached to the objects of sense and renounces all selfish purpose, one becomes a *yogin*. Therefore, man should try to lift himself (i.e. his individual self) by himself (i.e. by devoting himself to the worship of the Universal Self that resides in his heart). The Supreme or Universal Self is always with us, residing in the heart of each being. It is the consciousness underlying the ordinary individualized conciousness of everyday life but incommensurable with it. The two are different in kind, though the Supreme is realizable by one who is prepared to lose his life in order to save it by diverting himself from mundane ends to divine ends and by getting rid of all dualities—likes and dislikes, pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow, honour and dishonour and so on and by treating all alike and by realizing the unity of all creation by visualizing God in every creature, great as well as small.

Chapter VII

This chapter has been entitled 'Jnāna-Vijnāna-yoga', or

the *yoga* (discourse) about wisdom and knowledge and the relationship existing between the two. In the last 2 verses of the chapter, the Lord stated the superiority of the *yogin* over the *tapasvin* or ascetic as well as over the learned *karmakandin*. But among all *yogis* the one who is full of faith and who worships Krishna (the incarnation of Vishnu) is said to be the one most attuned to the Lord in *yoga*. Arjuna, is, therefore, advised to be a *yogin*-cum-*bhakta*. Continuing the discussion of how Arjuna should behave like a true *yogin*, the Lord states that he should regard Krishna as his refuge and see to it that his mind clings to Him all the time if he wants to know the true nature of the Lord. And since Arjuna is self-possessed and is full of faith in Krishna, the Lord agrees to reveal to him his otherwise unknowable nature. The Lord declares that He has 2 aspects. The first is His lower Nature (*aparā prakṛti*); this is inanimate Nature consisting of water, fire, air, earth, ether, heart, mind and self-sense or egoism (*ahaṁkāra*)—His *aṣtadhā aparā prakṛti* (His eight-fold lower form). The second aspect of the Lord is called *parā prakṛti* or His higher Nature, consisting of the Soul or Self that animates the world. These 2 aspects of the Lord are the source of the entire universe. Thus, the Lord is the cause of the world's birth and death, its generation as well as its destruction. The Universal Being of the Lord includes the totality of the Unconscious in His lower Nature and the totality of the conscious in His higher. Apart from God nothing exists in its truest sense; there is no higher principle than *Īśvara* who effects anything and is everything. He is taste in the waters, light in the moon and the sun, the syllable 'aum' in the Vedas, sound in ether and manhood in man. Every being is in God but God is beyond every being because He transcends everything. Man does not recognize Him on account of delusion caused by the three *guṇas*. The divine *māyā* or the lower nature of God, consisting of the 3 *guṇas* or modes, is hard to overcome. But those who take refuge in Him alone are able to transcend her because they become egoless and detached and do their worship without any selfish end, knowing full-

well that God is *sādhibhūta* (Lord of all beings), *sādhiyajna* (Lord of all sacrifices) and *sadhidaiva* (Lord of the gods)—all at one and the same time.

Chapter VIII

This chapter has been entitled 'Akṣarabrahmayoga' or the discourse about achieving union with the Imperishable Absolute. In the last verse of the preceding chapter, the Lord used terms such as *adhibūta*, *adhiyajna* and *adhidaiva* and a little earlier terms like *karma* and *Brahma*. Arjuna seeks the explanations of these technical terms and the Lord provides the explanation desired by Arjuna in this chapter. The Lord says that *Brahma* is the Imperishable Absolute Supreme One; *Adhyātma* is His own *bhāva*; it is spirit in man, lord of the body and a phase of the Divine which constitutes the Individual Self called *jīvātman*. By the term *karma* is meant the whole cosmic evolution, bringing beings into existence—*visarga* or emanation. By the term *adhibhūta* is meant the perishable form of *Brahma* called *prakṛti* or Nature. The term *adhidaiva* refers to the presiding deity of the Cosmos, called *Hiraṇyamaya Puruṣa* or *Hiraṇyagarbha* or *Brahmā*. The embodied Krishna, a form of Vishnu, is the presiding deity of all *yajnas* or sacrifices and is therefore called *Adhiyajna*. But these are various forms of Krishna himself—Brahman, Adhyātma, Karman, Adhibhūta or Kṣara and *Adhiyajna*. But at the time of one's death, whichever form one remembers one goes to the *loka* or state of the very same god. Therefore, a man should remember the Absolute Krishna all the time in order to attain to His state, devoting himself entirely to Him not only in body but also in mind and understanding. Arjuna should take part in the ensuing battle remembering Krishna with full dedication and faith. This way, he will obtain the Lord's state after his death—the state of blessedness and peace unlimited and will go beyond the cycle of births and deaths. From the realm of *Brahmā* downwards, all worlds are subject to change, for the residents there have to come back to the earth after a certain amount of time, but on reach-

ing the realm of Krishna, the Absolute, there is no coming back, for there is complete liberation or *mokṣa*. Krishna is *avyakta* or the Unmanifested One and *akṣara* or the Imperishable One, on reaching whom on one ever returns to this world of the mortals. And *yoga* is the surest path leading to the realm of the Absolute. Hence, Arjuna will be well-advised to remain a *yogin* all the time by remembering the Lord and doing his work with no regard for fruits whatsoever, treating it as His work, assigned to him.

Chapter IX

This chapter has been entitled 'Rājavidyā-Rājaguhya-yoga' or the discourse on Sovereign Knowledge and Sovereign Mystery. In the last verse of the preceding chapter *yoga* has been asserted as the surest way of reaching the realm of the Absolute. In the present chapter Lord Krishna continues that discussion in reference to one most efficient form of *yoga* called *Rājayoga*, the king of all sciences and all disciplines and the greatest mystery, the surest means of salvation. As the Lord expounds *Rajayoga*, it emerges as total devotion and total surrender to the Lord who is the Absolute incarnate, governor and ruler of *prakṛti*, the One Reality pervading the entire universe: father, mother, husband, grandfather; be-all and end-all of the world, and yet transcending everything. Whatever the devotee does, whatever he eats, whatever he offers, whatever he gives away, whatever austerities he practises—all must be done to Him and Him alone. Those who worship Him, meditating on Him alone, unmindful of all other gods and all other things, are protected by His saving care and energizing grace, taking up all their burdens and anxieties, granting them a full assurance of blessedness. Though the Lord is the same to all beings and though to Him none is hateful and none is dear, yet those, who worship Him devoutly and wholeheartedly, truly are in Him and He is also in them. The Lord's true devotee with unflinching and undivided faith, however, vile and low he may be, can never be lost: through true devotion he is sure to attain *mokṣa*.

Thus, the Lord alone deserves to be worshipped by man for He alone can bring salvation.

Chapter X

This chapter has been named 'Vibhūtiyoga' because it provides a detailed account of the most eminent manifested glories of the Lord, the Ultimate Reality, the Creator, Sustainer and Destroyer of the Universe which He pervades and transcends at one and the same time. The Lord continues His own characterization initiated in the previous chapter with a little more vividness and preciseness. He is the First of all Beings and His origin remains a mystery even to the gods and the great sages. One who recognizes Him as Unborn and without origin and as the Ultimate Reality and Ultimate Ruler of the world, gets rid of all sins. The Lord is the Ultimate source of all contraries. The learned worship Him wholeheartedly with full devotion and love, realizing the fact that Krishna is the origin of everything. This full and unflinching devotion earns them true wisdom (*buddhiyoga*) by means of which they get united with the Lord. Arjuna concurs in what the Lord says and wishes to learn the aspects of Nature where the presence of the Lord is more clearly manifest and pronounced so that he could meditate on them with greater ease and facility. So, the Lord reveals His most prominent *vibhūtis* or glories on which the devotees can meditate more easily. Among the 12 *ādityas*, He is Vishnu; among the luminous things He is the sun; among the winds He is Marīci; among the planets He is the moon. Of the vedas He is *Sāmaveda*; of the gods He is Indra. Of the *Rudras* He is Śaṇkara; of the *yakṣas* and *rakṣasas* He is Kubera; of the *vasus* He is Agni; of the mountain peaks He is Sumeru; of the priests He is Bṛhaspati; of the war generals He is Skanda; of the trees He is Aśvatṭha; of the horses He is Uccaiḥśravas; of the elephants He is Airāvat; of the serpents He s Vāsuki; of the cobras He is Ananta or Śeṣa; of the birds, He is Garuda; of the mountains He is Himālaya; of the months, He is Mārgaśīrṣa or Agrahāyaṇa, corresponding to November/December; of the seasons He is

Kusumākara or Spring; of the weapon-holders He is Rāma; of the rivers He is the Ganges; of the great sages He is Bhṛgu; of the *Siddhas* (perfected ones) He is Kapila, the sage; of the letters He is 'A' and of the utterances He is 'Oṁkāra'. Thus, the very best and most excellent item in all categories in the world should be taken to be the most prominent manifestations of the Lord who defies all description for He has pervaded the entire universe only with a fraction of Himself.

Chapter XI

This chapter has been entitled 'Viśvarūpadarśanayoga' or the discourse on the vision of the Cosmic Form of the Lord. Hearing from the Lord a pretty detailed account of his own prominent manifestations, Arjuna expresses to Him his ardent desire to see the sovereign form of the Lord. The latter, moved by the acute and loving curiosity of the former, grants him a divine vision with which he is able to see the Cosmic Form of the Lord, containing all the powers of the Universe, serving as various aspects of that Form—all the 12 *ādityas*, 8 *vasus*, 11 *Rudras*, 49 *maruts* or winds and innumerable other unforeseen wonderful forms. It had innumeable mouths, innumerable eyes having divine garlands and divine perfumes and ointments—all wonderous, resplendent and boundless, looking on all sides. If the light of a thousand suns were to burst forth at once in the sky, that would be the splendour of that mighty One who contained the whole Universe within His Form, including all the gods, demons, *asuras*, *siddhas*, *gandharvas*, *yakṣas*, *mahṛṣis* and in fact everything, past, present and future. Arjuna with uplifted hands feels overawed when he sees the army of mankind entering the mouth of the Lord; he supplicates to the great One to explain to him His Primal Life. The Lord tells him that He is Time Eternal, manifested on the battlefield to slay the race of men. Except Arjuna, all the soldiers formed in hostile ranks are bound to perish and so he (i.e. Arjuna) must arise and gain glory by being the Lord's instrument in defeating his enemies

who have already been destroyed by the arms of the Lord. At this, Arjuna calls Krishna the first of the gods, the first and final cause, the ancient sire, infinite and undivided being, refuge of the universe, being and non-being at one and the same time, embracing all and going beyond all. He asks the Lord to assume once again His previous gentle form, having 4 hands. The Lord tells him that never before was any individual granted grace to see His Cosmic Form; Arjuna has been able to see this Form only with the help of the Lord's mystic power called *yogic* power. Neither through the Vedas, nor by sacrifices nor by gifts nor by severe penances and austerities can the Lord in His Cosmic Form be seen; this Form of His can be seen only by a devout soul with unswerving devotion and faith, looking upon the Lord as his goal, working without any attachment whatsoever, loving all creatures alike without any discrimination.

Chapter XII

This chapter has been called 'Bhaktiyoga' or a discourse on devotion. In the last verse of the previous chapter the Lord observed that only through undivided and unswerving devotion to Him could His devotee see His Cosmic Form. So, quite pertinently Arjuna raises a question whether a worshipper of the Lord's Unmanifested Form (*nirguṇa bhakta*) or that of His Manifested Form (*saguṇa bhakta*) is more established in *yoga* (i.e. is nearer to God). The Lord expresses His opinion in favour of the latter because the worship of the Manifested Form of the Lord is easier to practise. Those whose thoughts are set on Him at all hours, the Lord delivers from the ocean of death-bound existence, securing for them a place in the Eternal *Brahma*. The Lord loves those most who, full of faith, are totally dedicated to Him and are completely detached from the world, have no hostility towards anyone, but are full of compassion for all and treat joy and sorrow, honour and dishonour, praise and blame alike.

Chapter XIII

This chapter is named 'Kṣetra-Kṣetrajna-Vibhāga-Yoga'

or 'A Discourse On the Distinction Between Field and Its Knower—viz., the Body and the Spirit.' Continuing His discussion on the *nirguṇa* and *saguṇa* devotees, the Lord dwells on the distinction between the body and the Soul, Nature and Man. The body is called the field because just as the sown seeds yield fruits in consequence of their nature, so the acts done by man effect their results in the body of man. The person who knows the true nature of the body is called *'kṣetrajna'* (i.e. Knower of the field). The Lord Himself is the *Kṣetrajna* of all fields (i.e. all beings) as opposed to the *Kṣetrajna* of a single field (i.e. one single individual) who is comparatively limited in his powers. True knowledge means the knowledge about *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajna* or body and Soul or *prakṛti* and *puruṣa*. The body representing Matter consists of 5 gross elements (*tanmātrās*), 5 senses of action called *karmendriyas*, 5 senses of perception called *jnanendriyas*, 5 objects of senses called *gocaras*, Mind (*manas*), Understanding or Intellect (*buddhi*), self-sense (*ahaṁkāra*) and the unmanifested substance called *mahat*, totalling altogether 24 principles recognized by the Saṁkhya school of philosophy. Along with these there are 7 modifications of the body called *vikāras*, namely, desire and hatred, pleasure and pain, the aggregate (*samghāta*), animation or sensibility (*cetanā*) and steadfastness or firmness (*dhṛti*). According to the Lord, modesty, sincerity, innocence, patience, absence of desire for things of senses and vanity, constant worship of the Lord, and all that elevates the Soul, fall under what is called *jnāna* or true knowledge and the opposite of these should be included in the category of ignorance or *ajnāna*. After this brief discourse, the Lord tells Arjuna about that through which knowledge of immortality is obtained. This is the Supreme Being or *Parabrahma*, the divine principle which is without origin and is neither existent (*sat*) nor non-existent (*asat*) neither manifest nor unmanifest. His hands and feet are everywhere. He dwells in the world, encompassing everything. He is within and without all beings: motionless and yet moving; not discerned because of His subtlety; near and yet re-

mote. He is knowledge, its object and its end, seated in the hearts of all. He who worships Krishna, regarding none other than Him as the true object of worship and as *Parabrahma*, becomes one with Him.

After this the Lord asks Arjuna to realize the relationship existing between *prakṛti* and *puruṣa*, i.e. between the Lord's mystic power called Nature and His partial manifestation known as the Soul (*ātman*). Both of these are without origin and eternal, and the Lord causes the birth, preservation and dissolution of the Universe through these 2 Natures (*prakṛtis*) of His—*parā* and *aparā* of Chapter VII, verses 4–5. The difference between *prakṛti* and *puruṣa* is that the first is the cause of all activities as well as the instrument of those activities whereas the second is the agent of the enjoyment of those activities. By the term 'activities' the Lord means the phenomena of birth and death, pleasure and pain and so on, and by the term 'enjoyment' he implies the undergoing of those processes to which the Soul (*puruṣa*) is subjected. *Prakṛti* or Nature is represented by the body and *puruṣa* is represented by the life-force residing in the body. The *puruṣa* (life-force or Soul) residing in Nature (i.e. the body) enjoys the 3 qualities of *rajas*, *tamas*, and *sattva*, which are born of *prakṛti*, though his true nature has nothing to do with those 3 qualities which exclusively belong to *prakṛti*. The Soul's misguided attachment with the 3 qualities of Nature is the cause of its birth in good or evil wombs. The pure, true and essential form of *puruṣa* is nothing short of divine. Every being should try to realize this essential nature of his Soul which is beyond the 3 qualities of Nature or *Prakṛti*. The day he realizes his true nature (i.e. his divine identity), he will become completely liberated from the shackles of birth and death. The realization of the true nature of the Soul is possible through meditation, knowledge and action (*dhyāna*, *sāṁkhya* and *karma*). (All these paths of self-realization have been explained by the Lord in the early chapters of the *Gītā*. One can adopt any one of these paths and transcend Nature without fail.)

Chapter XIV

This chapter is entitled 'Guṇatrayavibhāgayoga' or 'A Discourse Regarding the Trio of the Qualities of Nature.' The Lord has asserted in the preceding chapter that the ultimate cause of the Soul's placement or imprisonment in the body is its attachment with the objects of the senses which are the products of the 3 qualities of Nature: *tamoguṇa*, *rajoguṇa*, and *satoguṇa*. Since these qualities play such a crucial role in the enslavement of the Soul, the Lord deems it fit to dwell on them in greater detail.

The Lord begins his discourse by observing that all beings of the Universe are the products of the Lord's seeds that He places in the womb called *Mahad Brahma* (i.e. *Prakṛti* or Nature). Thus, Nature is the mother and Lord God is the father of all beings. It is only another way of saying what the Lord has said in the preceding chapter regarding *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* whose union results in the birth of all beings. But since Brahma (i.e. *Prakṛti*) is the totality of the 3 *guṇas*, they (these qualities) bind forcibly the divine element (the Lord's seeds) in different bodies. The 3 *guṇas* bind the Soul in their own ways. *Satoguṇa* manifests itself in joy and wisdom because it is the immaculate, illuminating and flawless aspect of Nature; *rajoguṇa* manifests itself in cupidity and attachment; it binds the Soul by directing it to actions and their fruits; and *tamoguṇa* manifests itself in dullness and sloth and binds the Soul by deluding it into believing that the body or the matter is its true self. In some beings *sattva* or *satoguna* prevails by subduing *rajas* and *tamas*; in others *rajas* prevails by overpowering *tamas* and *sattva*; and yet in others *tamas* prevails by overcoming *rajas* and *sattva*. When light and discernment dawn on a being, we have to take it that he is *satoguṇī* (i.e. one who is dominated by *sattva*). When in any being there is a manifest tendency towards reward-oriented actions, restlessness, and a thirst for enjoyment of power and pelf, we must regard that being as *rajoguṇī* (i.e. one who has the preponderance of *rajas* in his self). Similarly, if we find a being having disinclination towards the performance of his

assigned duties, frivolity, and stupor, we must take it that he is *tamoguṇī* (i.e. one who is ruled by *tamas*). If a man dies when there is the dominance of *sattva* in him, he goes to the world of the blessed and the sinless; when in a man there is the ascendence of *rajas* at the time of his death, he is reborn in the family of men of actions (such as kings and executives); and when a man dies under the dominance of *tamas*, he is reborn as lower beings such as beasts, insects, trees, etc. The real aim of a man's life, according to Lord Krishna, should be the achievement of the transcendence of the 3 *guṇas* (*niṣtraiguṇyatā*). When Arjuna wants to know the best way to achieving this transcendence, the Lord says that the best way to the achievement of that goal is to ignore the *guṇas* by allowing them to have their share in life and to remain unaffected by them by cultivating *samatvabuddhi* or *samadarśitā* (i.e. an evenness of outlook, regarding everything as having one and the same value whether it is a friend or a foe, gold or stone) but above all, by developing pure and absolute love for the Lord without any thought of reward for his devotion to Him.

Chapter XV

This chapter is designated as 'Puruṣottamayoga' or 'A Discourse About the Highest Being.' The Lord extends His discussion of the preceding chapter on the 3 *guṇas* by explaining the world in terms of the fig tree (*Aśvaṭṭha*) which has its roots above (i.e. in the Lord, the Highest Being) and branches below (i.e. in the form of the extension of Matter, here, there and everywhere). The verses of the Vedas are the leaves of this world-tree because Vedic sacrifice is said to be the sustainer of the world. The branches of this tree are extended in all directions, above as well as below, in the form of numerous *yonis* or life-forms such as gods, men, demons, *nāgas*, *kinnaras*, etc. Sense-objects are the twigs of this tree and the 3 qualities or modes of Nature are the nourishment of this grand tree. Downward are drawn the roots of this tree, binding men in a chain of actions by way of sending

them forth in a cycle of births and deaths in accordance with their good, bad, or neutral acts. This tree is eternal and without beginning. One who uses the sword of *asanga* or non-attachment alone could cut it down and attain that Primal Person (*ādya puruṣa*) from whom has come forth the ancient extension of the Cosmic or World-tree. When a man comes to know of the Primal Person full-well, all the actions that he has performed cease their operation and he becomes totally free from the cycle of births and deaths. Those who are free from pride and delusion, who have conquered the evil of attachment, who have abandoned all desires, and are absolutely dedicated to the Supreme Spirit, and are liberated from the dualities of pleasure and pain, attain to that eternal state called *Brahman* whom neither the sun enlightens nor the moon, nor the fire. Those who reach this state return no more to the world of Matter.

The Lord extends His discussion by telling that in this world there are 2 Persons (*puruṣas*): *kṣara* (perishable) and *akṣara* (imperishable). The perishable are all living bodies and the imperishable is 'the Lord on High' called *kūtastha* (i.e. the Soul residing in those bodies). But there is another *puruṣa*, the Highest Existence called the *Paramātman*, the *Īśvara* or the Supreme Spirit, who pervades all the 3 worlds and sustains them. This is none other than Krishṇa Himself. He who, undeluded, knows Krishṇa as the Highest Person, is the knower of everything because Krishṇa is all that is knowable, the creator and knower of the Vedas and of Vedanta and is the epitome of all knowledge and wisdom. After knowing Krishna's true Form and Power, man becomes wise in the truest sense of the term and emerges as *kṛtakṛtya* (i.e. one whose work has been done and who is required no longer to perform any duty whatsoever).

Chapter XVI

Chapter XVI is entitled 'Daivāsurasaṁpadvibhāgayoga' or 'A Discourse About the Distinction Between the Divine and the Demonic Endowments.' The Lord dwells in this chapter

on the 2 broad divisions of humanity: divine and demonic. The people falling under the first category have such features as fearlessness, purity of mind, wisdom, concentration, charity, self-control, sacrifice, study of the scriptures, austerity, uprightness, vigour, forgiveness, fortitude and freedom from malice and excessive pride. On the other hand, people falling under the second category are marked by ostentation, arrogance, excessive pride, anger, harshness and ignorance. The divine endowments are made for deliverance and demonic ones for bondage. The demonic people do not believe in any ordered creation nor in any *Īśvara*, sustaining the world. They give themselves up to insatiable desires, and are full of hypocrisy and delusion. They are complete materialists, for according to them, the highest aim of life is the gratification of human desires. These people are highly egoistical, having a very exaggerated notion of themselves. Such people are bound to fall into a foul hell. Self-conceited, obstinate, filled with pride and arrogance of wealth, these people perform sacrifices which are sacrifices only in name, with ostentation of all description, without regard to any rules whatsoever. The Lord says that he hurls these evil-doers into the wombs of the vilest creatures and, as a result, they are entailed in the cycle of births and deaths till eternity. The Lord tells Arjuna succinctly that lust, anger and greed are the 3 gateways, leading to hell. So a man, seeking God, should give up the evil tendencies which are found in demonic people and follow the scriptural law for his salvation; he must do the right actions prescribed by the *Śāstras*.

Chapter XVII

This chapter is called 'Śraddhā-traya-vibhāga-yoga' or 'A Discourse About the Three-fold Division of Faith.' At the close of the previous chapter the Lord had stressed the need of acting in accordance with the scriptures after conquering lust, anger and greed. Arjuna, naturally, gets curious to know the fate of those who offer sacrifices with pure faith but fail to follow the word of the scriptures. The Lord tells Arjuna that

faith varies in men in accordance with the dominant *guṇas* in them. Good men, with *satoguṇa* as the dominant *guṇa* in their personality, worship the gods; the passionate men with *rajoguṇa* as their dominant *guṇa*, worship the *yakṣas* and *rākṣasas* and men full of ignorance and sloth, having *tamas* as their dominant *guṇa*, worship the spirits of the underworld such as *bhūtas* and *pretas* (ghosts and ghouls). Those who resort to violent austerities out of sheer lust and passion in total disregard of the scripture, not only oppress the mass of elements in their body but also the Lord who resides within them in the form of their Souls. Of course, such people should be regarded as demonic.

Just as faith differs from personality to personality, so do food, sacrifice, penance and alms-giving, among the people of different *guṇas*. Those, who have *satoguṇa* as their dominant mode, have a liking for foods which are vitality- producing, strength-giving, joy-giving, assuring well-being and are savoury, nourishing, substantial and cordial. But those who are dominated by *rajoguṇa* prefer foods that are bitter, sour, saltish, over-hot, pungent, harsh, and burning. Similarly, those who are ruled by *tamoguṇa*, have a preference for foods that are stale, have lost savour, and are stinking, corrupt and filthy. What is true of food is equally true of sacrifice, penance and alms-giving. These vary in forms in accordance with the ruling *guṇa* in the persons concerned. The Lord concludes His discourse by observing that '*Om, Tat, Sat*' are the attributes of the Supreme Spirit called *Param Brahma*. These attributes suggest the absolute supremacy, universality and reality that belong to the Lord in the fullest sense of the terms. So one, who is seeking after *Brahman*, must do all acts of sacrifice, austerity or of alms-giving without the least regard for rewards, and with complete and unflinching faith in the Lord.

Chapter XVIII

The last and eighteenth chapter has been entitled 'Mokṣa-saṁnyāsayoga' or 'A Discourse On Release Through Renun-

ciation.' Having heard the discourse of the Lord on right sacrifice, right austerity and the right alms-giving, given in the preceding chapter, Arjuna expresses his wish to know the true form of *saṁnyāsa* (renunciation) and of *tyāga* (relinquishment). The Lord tells him that the true meaning of saṁnyāsa or renunciation is the giving up all acts prompted by the expectation of their fruits and tyāga or relinquishment, in the truest sense of the term, implies the abandonment of the fruits of all actions. No work is evil, the Lord asserts, and so far as the works of sacrifice, alms-giving, and austerity or penance are concerned, they must be performed at all costs because they are the greatest purifiers in the world. However, while performing them, one must give up attachment and desire for fruits, accruing to them. The Lord seizes the opportunity to dwell at some length on the different forms of *tyāga* or relinquishment. People having *tamoguṇa* as their dominant mode are in the habit of renouncing duties that ought to be done. Since this relinquishment of duties is due to *tamas* or ignorance, it is called *tāmasika tyāga* or relinquishment dictated by *tamoguṇa*. The relinquishment of duties on the ground that they are painful or are likely to cause physical suffering is *rājasika tyāga* or passionate relinquishment since it has been dictated by *rajoguṇa*. Similarly, the relinquishment based on *satoguṇa* consists in the abandonment of the fruits of and attachment with the duties that have been prescribed by the scriptures and are imperative. A real renouncer is one who does not have any aversion for an unprosperous work and for a really prosperous work has no attachment. Good, bad and mixed results accrue to the acts of those people who work with some reward in view, whereas no results proceed from the acts of those who have no desire for any rewards for their work. Consequently, the latter class of people alone become free from the cycle of births and deaths and obtain complete liberation called *mukti* or *nirvāṇa*. These people are without egoism or self-sense and are thus able to avoid the binding effects of their actions. If anyone deludes himself by the thought that by avoiding all ac-

tions he can become pure and free from the cluthches of *māyā*, he is clearly befooling himself, for there is none in the world and among the gods in the heaven who has not been enslaved by the modes of Nature (*Prakṛti*). The Lord asserts that separate works for *Brāhmaṇas*, *Kṣatriyas*, *Vaiśyas*, and *Śūdras* that have been assigned by the *Śāstras* were determined by the modes that prevail in their separate natures. The work of a *Brāhmaṇa*, arising from his proper nature involves sedateness, self-restraint, religious austerities (*tapas*), purity, patience, rectitude, spiritual knowledge, learning and the observance of the rites of the faith. The work of a *Kṣatriya*, born out of his proper nature, involves heroism, energy, firmness, skill, resolution in the battlefield, liberality and a ruler's bearing. The work of a *Vaiśya*, born of his proper nature, involves agricultural activity, tending of cattle and buying and selling of goods (i.e. commerce). Likewise, the work of a *Śūdra*, born of his proper nature, involves servitude to the first 3 classes of people to the best of his capacity. Thus the man, who is content with his own work—whatever it is—attains perfection (i.e. knowledge of *Brahma*) by dedicating his own work to Him who is the source of all things and by whom this whole universe was spread out with all its varieties. In order to achieve salvation a man ought to do his assigned work without any thought of reward or fruit, thinking only of the Lord and taking refuge in His Grace Unlimited. Arjuna is advised by the Lord to fight the battle which is his assigned work in accordance with the nature of a *Kṣatriya*, dedicating himself entirely to Krishṇa, the Lord of all the 3 worlds, without the least trace of egoism. This done, he can be sure of utmost peace and tranquillity. In fact, there is no way out for Arjuna but to fight the battle. If he thinks that he can escape from his duty as a warrior, he is clearly in the wrong for *māyā* (the Energy of the Lord) will compel him to fight the righteous war selflessly, with full faith in the mercy of Krishṇa. At least, Arjuna says that his doubts have disappeared and that he is now fully determined to discharge his duty as a true *Kṣatriya*. The chapter (and the work as a whole) closes

with Sañjaya telling Dhṛtaraṣtra of his horripilation as a result of his having heard the dialogue of Krishṇa and Arjuna by the favour of Vyāsa who had provided him divine vision, enabling him to see from the chamber of Dhṛtaraṣtra all that was happening on the battlefield and report it to the king. Sañjaya says that he is experiencing extraordinary joy again and again as he recalls the wonderful form of Krishṇa shown to Arjuna. He is of the firm belief that prosperity, victory and greatness will follow invariably wherever Krishṇa, the Lord of *yoga*, and Arjuna, the wielder of the bow Gāndīva, the son of Pṛtha (i.e. Kuntī), are present.

Main Teaching of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*

From a careful perusal of the above chapter-wise analysis of the argument of the Hindu scripture it becomes manifestly clear that the focal point of the work is how to make Arjuna agree to the proposal of participating in a righteous war against the members of his own family, friends and relatives, arrayed on the side of Duryodhana. Lord Krishṇa persuades Arjuna, by all kinds of arguments, to realize the importance of duty for duty's sake, without any ulterior motive whatsoever. Thus, love for duty emerges as the basic teaching of the *Gītā*: this is what the work has chosen to call *karmayoga* or the doctrine of duty for its own sake.

But the doctrine of duty has been propounded in a religious context as the propounder of that doctrine happens to be God Himself in the form of Lord Krishṇa. This is why the 'doctrine' emerges as a way of God-realization. But since the path of duty is only one of many such paths, the *Gītā* discusses some other paths of God-realization as well: the path of knowledge (*sāṁkhyayoga*) and the path of devotion (*bhaktiyoga*), with the same vigour and fervour. The work describes all these various ways of God-realization but comes to the conclusion that they are, in no way, anti-thetical to one another: in their essentials they are one and the same. This becomes amply clear when the *Gītā* describes the signs of those who have achieved excellence in their respective ways of

God-realization—whether it is knowledge, duty or devotion: in each case the symtoms describd are the same. Clearly, the *Gītā* establishes a synthesis among the diverse ways of achieving divine consciousness. The area of agreement discerned by the *Gītā* in these diverse ways lies in the negation of the ego and the cultivation of disinterestedness.

Now the question can be raised as to why the Hindu scripture lays so much emphasis on the negation of the ego and on cultivation of disinterestedness. The answer is to be found in the concept of *saṁsāra* that the *Gītā* presupposes. This concept implies that the Soul is caught up in the cobweb of births and deaths and the consequent assumption by it of different bodies according to its acts (*karma*). According to the *Bhagavad-Gītā* all acts are governed by the 3 qualities or modes of Nature (*Prakṛti*) called *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. It is these modes of Nature that bind the Soul on to the different bodies in accordance with the acts performed in a given life-span. The Soul can get complete freedom from the bodily forms only by transcending the modes of Nature, by becoming *triguṇātīta* or *nistraiguṇya*. Indeed, the negation of the ego and disinterested action are the only devices by means of which the Soul can achieve transcendence of Nature. If a man acts with some desire in view, it follows that he is dominated by *rāga* or attachment which is the product of *rajoguṇa* and wherever there is attachment of any sort, the Soul's bondage becomes inevitable. It is for this very reason that the *Gītā* stresses the need of ego-less and disinterested action, whether one is following the path of knowledge, work, or devotion.

The Hindu scripture stresses the difference between the body and the Soul—the 2 forms of divine manifestation in the world. 'Body' has been sometimes called *Prakṛti* or 'Nature', sometimes *kṣetra* or 'Field' and sometimes *kṣara puruṣa* or 'Perishable Person', and the 'Soul' has been juxtaposed with it invariably in the same order as *puruṣa* or 'Man', *kṣetrajna* or 'knower of the field', and *akṣara puruṣa* or 'Imperishable Person'. In the considered view of the *Gītā*, body is the lower form of God's manifestation and the Soul is undoubtedly the

higher form of His manifestation on the earth. The Soul is immortal, omniscient and the source of all light and energy. All the changes that take place in the world belong to the body and not to the Soul which remains unaffected amidst the world of eternal change. Man's true form is the Soul and not the body. As a result, so long as man is under the influence of the 3 modes of Nature, he fails to realize his true self which is the Soul, residing within. It is, therefore, essential for him to rise beyond the 3 *guṇas* (modes) and that implies becoming indifferent to the dualities of the world—pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow, heat and cold, success and failure, birth and death, and so on. This state of impartial indifference to all dualities is designated by the *Gītā* as *sṭhitaprajnatā* or 'stablemindedness' but it is very hard to achieve this state.

The *Gītā* recognizes 4 levels of consciousness—the level of the senses (*indriyas*), the level of the heart (*manas*), the level of intelligence (*buddhi*), and the level of the Soul (*sah*, i.e. *ātman*). Thus, a gradual growth of consciousness has been recommended by the Hindu scripture for the real well-being of man. When an individual attains the last level of consciousness (i.e. the level of *ātman*), he is able to perceive the principle of unity operating everywhere in the Universe, witnessing himself in all objects—a Brahmaṇa, a dog, an elephant and a dog-eater, making no distinction among them whatsoever, regarding earth, stone and gold as of equal value, and visualizing God in everything. The achievement of this spiritual vision is possible to a person who shuns the objects of the world not only physically but also mentally and emotionally.

On the metaphysical plane, the *Gītā* regards Krishṇa as the embodiment of the Supreme Reality, the Universal Spirit called *Brahma* who pervades the entire Universe and at the same time transcends it. He is the Lord of *Prakṛti* or Nature whose help He takes in creating the world with all its varieties and forms. Clearly, *prakṛti* (Nature) is the Energy (*śakti*) of the Lord, His *yogamāyā*. However, in the considered view of the *Gītā*, Nature (*prakṛti*) is the lower form of

the Lord's being whereas the higher form of His being is the Soul—the immortal and imperishable substance residing in the bodies. Thus, the *Gītā* recognizes 3 ultimate realities in the Universe: God, Soul and Nature. God is the Lord not only of Nature (*Prakṛti*) but also of all individual souls. That is why He is called *Puruṣottama* whereas the Soul is *akṣara puruṣa* and Nature is *kṣara puruṣa*. There is no end to the glories of the Lord. He is everywhere, pervading the whole Universe and transcending it; He is most prominently to be found in the hearts of all living beings. Wherever one finds the most excellent being whether in the sphere of prowess, knowledge, or wealth, one must regard that being as the special manifestation of God Almighty, the prime mover of the Universe. Those who do their assigned work as an offering to God without the least thought of any reward for their work, with unflinching faith in His mercy, are destined to reach the abode of the Lord; these blessed souls are no longer required to take birth again for they obtain complete liberation from the cycle called *saṁsāra*—the eternal process of births and deaths. In the normal course, the Soul is required to assume a body which it leaves or discards when it finds that body tattered, only to assume another in accordance with the deeds performed by the previous body. So, if a soul wants to get rid of this cycle of births and deaths for ever, it must surrender itself to the service of the Lord without any desire for the fruits of his deeds. The Lord is never weary of coming to the rescue of His devotees; He only requires total surrender from them.

The Lord is full of compassion for the righteous and the faithful. Whenever there is decline of the faith and the upsurge of the evil forces, the Lord descends on the earth, manifesting Himself in a bodily form for the protection of the virtuous and the distruction of the vicious, establishing *dharma* or orderliness in all walks of life. The Lord is the beginning, middle and end of the Universe. We must seek shelter in Him by all means available to us, following the path of *yoga*—whether it is *karmayoga*, *jnānayoga*, *dhyānayoga*, or

bhaktiyoga. One thing that the Lord likes most in His devotees is purity of heart and total surrender to His Merciful Providence. Just as the Lord controls the Universe without any attachment whatsoever, He expects His devotees to emulate His conduct by doing their allotted work without any selfish motive for the maintenance of the world-order. For, following in the footsteps of the Lord, they will doubtless attain to His realm.

I think I have been able to summarize in the above paragraphs the main thoughts of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. Let us now see how the major Romantic poets of England responded to the Hindu text when it became available to them in their own language through the efforts of Warren Hastings and Sir Charles Wilkins in London in the year 1785. Wilkins's *Gītā* did not contain the original *Saṁskṛita* text; it had only a working English prose rendering of the verses of Vyāsa. Thus, the English readers could not be expected to appreciate the poetic merits of the original; they could, at best, derive inspiration from the ideas suggested by the prose version of those verses done by Wilkins. However, before we undertake the Himālayan task of tracing the impact of the *Gītā* on the English Romantic poets, we will be well-advised to give an account of the history of the encounter between the East and the West, with a view to showing that the West has been interested in the East (India) since the earliest of its recorded history. The next 2 chapters of this book are, therefore, devoted to this demonstration.

Notes and References

1. Sir Edwin Arnold, *The Song Celestial or Bhagavad-Gita*, Trubner & Co., London, 1885. Clearly Mr Arnold regarded the Hindu text as a long heavenly song.
2. The actual words used by Adi Shankaracharya are: '*Samastavedārthasārasaṁgrahabhūtaṁ... samastapuruṣārthasiddhim*.' Dr Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan has cited these words of Adi Shankara in his own edition of the Hindu scripture entitled *The Bhagavad-Gītā with an Introductory Essay, Sanskrit text,*

English translation and Notes, 1974, Blackie & Son, India Ltd., New Delhi, first published in Great Britain by George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1948.

3. Mahatma Gandhi, *Young India*, 1925, pp. 1078-79.
4. August-Wilhelm von Schlegel, *BhagavadGita, id est Thespesion Melos sive Almi Chrisnae et Arjunae Colloquium de Rebus Divinis, Bharateae Episodium*, Bonn, 1823. Edwin Arnold has cited the apostrophe of Schlegel to Vyasa in English translation; see his *Song Celestial*, op. cit., p. 5.
5. See Baron von Karl Wilhelm Humboldt's lecture entitled 'uber die unter dem Namen Bhagavad-Gita bekannte Episode de Mahabharrata' (On the episode in the Mahabharata that goes under the name of Bhagavad-Gita) delivered on 30 June 1825 at the Berlin Academy of Sciences and published in 1826.
6. Vide *Hibbert Journal*, April 1940, p. 341.
7. Ibid., p. 341.
8. Waldo, Emerson, *Journals*, VII, p. 511.
9. Thoreau, *Writings*, II, 328–29. See also *A Week on the Concord and Merrimac Rivers* (written 1840–4, but not published in full until 1849; 1906 edition), pp. 116 ff. The extract cited here is from *Walden* (New York, 1964; first published 1854), pp. 198 ff.
10. It must be placed on record that Victor Cousin's (1792–1867) first course of lectures, delivered to *Ecole Normale* soon after his political exile in Germany during 1820s, in which he had touched briefly upon the *Bhagavad-Gita*, had fired the imagination of Emerson.
11. Swami Chidbhavanand, *Srimadbhagavad-Gita*, Tirupparaitturai, 1965, (1975 edition), p. 42.
12. Dr Lorinser, 'Traces in the BG of Christian Writings and Ideas', *Indian Antiquary*, Volume 2 (1873), pp. 283–96. See also John Muir, 'On Dr Lorinser's BG and Christian Writings', *Indian Antiquary*, 4, 1875, pp. 77–81.
13. John Davies, *The Bhagavad-Gita or the Sacred Lay*, Trubner's Oriental Series; Hindu Philosophy, Trubner, London, 1882, p. 110.
14. A.A. Macdonell, *India's Past; A Survey of Her Literatures, Religions, and Antiquities* Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1927, p. 90.
15. Sir Charles Wilkins, *The Bhagvat-Geeta or Dialogues of*

Kreeshna and Arjoon, in Eighteen Lectures, with Notes, Translated from the Original in the Sanskreet, or Ancient Language of the Brahmans, having an Intoduction by Warren Hastings, C. Nourse, at the Strand, London, 1785, p. 25.

16. A.A. Macdonell, *India's Past*, op. cit., p. 15.
17. Ibid., p. 40.

India in the Ancient Intellectual Tradition of the West

There is a belief prevalent among some scholarly circles that the West came into contact with India for the first time in the year 327 BC when Alexander the Great of Macedonia invaded the northwestern part of India and achieved victory over Porus, the King of the Pauravas. This is clearly a very wrong notion because many Greeks had visited India several centuries before Alexander's famous invasion. In the mythical times, Orpheus, Dionysus and Heracles are believed to have made conquests in India. According to another tradition, Dionysus was actually a god of Indian origin—perhaps Shiva—and he had made a cultural conquest of Greece. This tradition seems to be true because it has now been fully established that Dionysus or Bacchus was an alien god in Greece, who had to face many problems before he could be accepted a member of the Greek pantheon—the great Olympians. Euripides (*c.* 480 BC–406 BC), the last of the 3 greatest tragic poets of ancient Greece, in his masterpiece *Bacchae* (or *The Bacchants*), clearly maintains through a speech of the god himself that Bacchus was an Oriental god. The relevant portion of the speech runs thus:[1]

> From the fields of Lydia and Phrygia, fertile in gold,
> I travelled first to the sun-smitten Persian plains,
> The walled cities of Bactria, the harsh Median country,
> Wealthy Arabia, and the whole tract of the Asian coast
> Where mingled swarms of Greeks and Orientals live
> In vast magnificent cities; and before reaching this,

The first city of Hellas I have visited,
I had already, in all those regions of the east,
Performed my dances and sent forth my ritual
To make my godhead manifest to mortal men.

It is remarkable that Euripides evinces his knowledge of the intermingling of the Orientals and the Greeks in Asia Minor which he calls the 'Asian Coast'. In all probability, he included Indians in what he called 'Orientals' or perhaps meant by that term Indians specially. The intermingling of the Greeks and Indians in the 'Asian Coast' referred to by Euripides (Asia Minor) gets support from the fact the great Sanskrit grammarian, Pāṇini, seems to have been acquainted with not only the people from Ionia whom he calls 'Yavanas' but also with the script of Ionia which he calls 'Yavanīlipi'[2] and this knowledge must have come to Pāṇini of Śālātura in Taxila not from the mainland of Greece but from Asia Minor where people from India, especially from Taxila and from Greece lived together, exchanged their views, and intermingled through marriage and cohabitation. Pāṇini's acquaintance with the Greek script speaks volumes for the then existing contact between Greece and India, of course, through Ionia. Pāṇini's date is not very certain but as Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru maintained in his *Discovery of India*, he lived at the commencement of the Buddhist era, i.e. the sixth century BC. Much before Pāṇini, in the great Indian epic, *Mahābhārata*, to which Pāṇini makes various references,[3] 'Yavanas' have been mentioned very frequently.[4] These references are proof positive of the most ancient Indo-Greek association. Here, we should place on record for the benefit of the common readers the fact that India was very well known to one Greek whose name was Scylax and who lived in the sixth century BC. Scylax belonged to the Carian city of south-western Asia Minor called Caryanda. He was selected by the Persian King Darius (*c.* 550 BC–485 BC, King of Persia 521 BC–485 BC) to become the first known explorer from the Western world who penetrated the regions south of the Hindu Kush and entered the subcontinent of India. The

famous Greek historian Herodotus (*c.* 485 BC–*c.* 425 BC) observes:[5]

> Much of Asia was explored at the command of Darius, wishing to know where the Indus—the only river other than the Nile that breeds crocodiles—discharges into the sea, he sent Scylax of Caryanda and others he could trust to discover and report on its course. They set out from Caspatyros in the country of Pactyica, and sailed their ships down the river in an easterly direction until they reached the sea; then, turning westward along the coast, they came after thirty months to the place from which the King of Egypt sent the Phoenicians, whom I have already mentioned, to circumnavigate Liby. After this expedition was completed, Darius conquered the Indians, and made use of this ocean (i.e. the Arabian Sea).

The above extract clearly mentions that Scylax started his expedition for the exploration of the course of the Indus from Caspatyros in the country of Pactyica. This proves beyond doubt that Greeks visited India in the sixth century BC. The place named 'Caspatyros' is to be identified with 'Kasyapapura' in Pāncāla (Herodotus's 'Pactyica'). Those who doubt the veracity of the references to the 'Yavanas' in the *Mahābhārata* and think those passages to be interpolations should rectify their view because Scylax the Greek had visited India and he may not have been the first—many Greeks before him could have come to India in the sixth century BC or even before that. That Scylax had not just made a visit to India but had made certain very significant observations about the country is very clearly shown by a citation from his work in Aristotle's *Politics*[6] to the effect that the ruling classes in India could be known and recognized by their external features alone and that this was unique of the Indians in the history of the human race. Aristotle's citation makes it very clear that the Greek explorer was widely recognized and discussed in the Greek world; his reports re-

garding India seem to have reached Greece soon after his expedition had been brought to a close, for his younger contemporary, Hecataeus of Miletus, who appears to be the first Greek after, of course, Scylax to have made a reference to India in the ancient Western literature, provides a good deal of information regarding the Indus. One of the places he mentions in connection with the Indus is 'Caspapyros' which he calls a 'frontier city of Gandhāra'.[7] Clearly, he had received his information regarding India from the records of Scylax—his 'Caspapyros' and the latter's 'Caspatyros' as reported by Herodotus seem to be referring to the same place in India (i.e. 'Kaśyapapura'). It must be mentioned here that Hecataeus wrote at the close of the sixth century, not long after the year 514 BC.

I have hinted in the preceding paragraph at the fact that India could be visited by the Western people even in the sixth century before the Christian era as was clearly demonstrated by the expedition of Scylax. Thus, the alleged visit of the earliest Greek philosopher Pythagoras (*c.* 580 BC–500 BC) does not appear to be a myth but a reality. If Scylax could visit India, why not Pythagoras? A very important historian of philosophy who flourished at the beginning of the 20th century, Samuel Johnson, called Pythagoras 'the first Orientalist of the world'[8] and the appelation is fully justified. This Greek sage belonged to Samos, a mountainous Greek island, 1.6 km off West Turkey (i.e. Asia Minor). He was, therefore, nicknamed 'the Samite' just as Aristotle has been nicknamed 'the Stagirite' because he came from Stagira in Macedonia. Since Samos was in the vicinity of Asia Minor and since there had been a long-standing contact between Greece and India through Asia Minor where the people from the two countries had long commingled, Pythagoras could not have found any difficulty in coming to India from where he learnt the doctrine of Metempsychosis, Vegetarianism, the wisdom of avoiding beans, non-violence, the doctrine of numbers, music of the spheres and above all, the geometrical rule that in a right-angled triangle, the square on the hypotenuse is equal to the

squares of the remaining two sides of the triangle. Though Herodotus and Apollonius of Tyana both were of the view that Pythagoras did not visit India (according to the first he received the doctrine of Metempsychosis from the Egyptians and in the view of the other he had received the mystical practices of the Indian sages not from those sages themselves but rather from the Ethiopian sages who were of Indian origin),[9] a great scholar of modern Germany—Leopold von Schroeder—has put forward many persuasive arguments in his brilliant book entitled *Pythagoras und die Inder* (Leipzig, 1884, Chapters I–III, pp. 5–59) to prove that Pythagoras had really been to India and was instructed by the Indian sages in the sixth century before the birth of Christ. According to Schroder, almost all the doctrines of Pythagoras were in vogue in the sixth century India before the Christian era; even the geometrical theorem, named after the Greek philosopher, was known to the Indian sages as the *Śulva Sūtras* conclusively prove.[10] Moreover, while the doctrine of Metempsychosis remains peripheral to Greek thought and was unknown to the Egyptian sages, in India it is universally upheld throughout the length and breadth of the country and has been cherished since times immemorial; Indians lived by this doctrine even during their earliest period of recorded history, for the *Yajurveda* and the *Brāhmaṇas* have incorporated it in the world-view that they project and these Hindu texts belong to a period that precedes that of Pythagoras by several centuries. The fact of the matter is that Metempsychosis occupies a central place in the think-tank of India as a whole; this can be easily deduced from the fact that it is virtually the only Vedic doctrine which Lord Buddha did not question. Schroder also adduced evidence from the *Yajurveda* to demonstrate an Indian priority for the Pythagorean prohibitions on animal sacrifice and on the eating of meat, as well as on the less easily explicable eating of beans. Schroder especially calls our attention to the fact that *Śulva Sutras* do not explain what we today call the Pythagorean theorem in the way Euclid expounded it in Greece but rather in the way Pythagoras is

said to have explained it to his disciples. Those who are interested in the way *Śulva Sutras* explained the geometrical theorem concerned will do well to consult the brilliant dissertation of Dr B. Dutta entitled *Science of the Śulb* (Calcutta, 1932).[11] However, whatever we know about Pythagoras has come down to us through the reports about his personal beliefs and teachings, preserved in the writings of later Greek authors; Pythagoras himself left nothing for the posterity from his own pen just as we have no personal writings of Buddha, Socrates, or of Christ which could enable us to accept or reject a view supposedly held by these great men. The belief that Pythagoras had really visited India was presumably recorded first by the Christian Greek scholars of Alexandria in the second century after the birth of Christ, of whom the most important was Clement (*c.* AD 150–AD 215). On the authority of his predecessor Alexander Polyhistor's book on Pythagorean symbols, Clement[12] maintains that Pythagoras had heard the Brahmins of India on the Oneness of the Godhead and on His immanence as well as on various other matters. He further asserts that Greek philosophy is derived in its essence from the philosophy of the gymnosophists of India and Egypt. (Vide his *Stromata*, L.XV, II.XX, VI.iv). Here, it must be borne in mind that Clement of Alexandria was the foremost pupil and successor to Pantaenus, the first principal of the Christian College in Alexandria—Pantaenus who, according to Eusebius (*Historia Ecclesiastia*, V. 10) as well as Jerome (*De Viris Illustribus*, XXXVI: Letter LXX, addressed to Magnus), had himself led a mission to India, his selection for the purpose of preaching Christianity in India having been made on the basis of his being a Stoic philosopher who alone could make the Brahmins listen to him by impressing them by means of his simple and austere living.

Clement's view regarding Pythagoras's visit to India finds support from another Greek writer—Lucian (*c.* AD 115?–*c.* AD 180)—Clement's contemporary, who in his dialogue 'The Runaway', (Vide Lucian V. 62–65) makes philosophy in Heaven remind Zeus of how He had first sent her to Earth:

> When I sped off, Father, I did not head for the Greeks straightway...making for the Indians to begin with, the most numerous population in the world, I had no difficulty about persuading them to come off their elephants and associate with me. Consequently, a whole tribe, the Brahmins, who border upon the Nechraei and the Oxydracae, are all enlisted under my command and not only live in accordance with my tenets, honoured by their neighbours, but die a marvellous death.

Zeus takes it that this is a reference to the Gymnosophists who immolate themselves without flinching. Philosophy, after a further exchange, continues:

> After the Brahmins I went direct to Ethiopia, and then down to Egypt; and after associating with their priests and prophets and instructing them in religion, I departed for Babylon to initiate Chaldeans and Magi; then from there to Scythia and then to Thrace where I conversed with Eumolpus and Orpheus, whom I sent in advance to Greece, one of them Eumolpus, to give the mysteries, as he had learned all about religion from me, and the other to win them over by the witchery of his music.

Clearly, the Brahmins of India, in the eyes of Lucian, are the supreme philosophers in the world. Naturally, in his view, Pythagoras thought of learning philosophy at the feet of the first of philosophers.

The story of Pythagoras's visit to India and of his initiation in the philosophical lore at the feet of the Brahmins there was made most popular by a Roman writer and orator—Lucius Apuleius (*c.* AD 127), who in his famous work *Florida XV* maintains very firmly that Pythagoras had definitely been to India with a view to learning philosophy from the Brahmins of that sacred country. Apuleius no doubt mentions the belief current in his day that Pythagoras was instructed by Zoroaster but asserts that 'it is the more generally received story that he had travelled of his own accord to

Egypt and that, not satisfied with what he learnt there of the power of ceremonies, of numbers, and of geometry, he afterwards visited the Chaldeans and the Brahmins and among the latter the Gymnosophists.'[13] Apuleius is even more precise about the respective influences of the Chaldeans and the Indian Gymnosophists. He says that the Chaldeans taught Pythagoras about the stars and, for a price, about medicine. But the Brahmins of India taught him the higher philosophy; questions such as 'what are the rules and principles of understanding?'; 'what are the functions of the body?'; 'how many are the mutations of life?'; 'what torments and rewards devolve upon the souls of the dead in accordance with their respective deserts?'...so on and so forth.

For a very long time the theory of Apuleius and Clement remained a matter of romance and fiction but as the antiquity of the civilization of India gradually became known and established and as more and more Indian texts came to the notice of the European scholars, the theory came to be recognized as a fact of history. In 1799, there appeared in Paris a 6-volume account of the travels of Pythagoras entitled *Voyages de Pythagore en Egypte, dans la Chaldee, dans l'Inde* written by Pierre-Sylvain Marechal. The Indian travels occupy 'Tome III' of the book. According to Marechal, the Indian Brahmin, who taught Pythagoras the main tenets of Hindu philosophy, was Yarbas. Now, if what the French writer says regarding the identity of Pythagoras's Indian teacher is correct, then 'Yarbas' is only the corrupt form of the name of the ancient Indian sage 'Yājnyavalkya' who appears prominently in *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* as the contemporary of King Janaka of Videha or Mithilā (at present in the state of Bihar). If late Professor A.L. Basham[14] could be trusted in his hypothesis regarding the age of Janaka, the king of Videha flourished during the age of Buddha (i.e. sixth century BC) and that would be the time of Yājnyavalkya, too. This tallies with the age of the Greek philosopher (*c.* 580–500 BC). Contemporaries of Pierre-Sylvain Marechal such as Huet, D'herbelot and Mignot are cited as authorities for the belief presented

in *Voyages de Pythagore*. According to these authorities, India was the legislator of the world in the field of ethics and philosophy in ancient times; the sacred letters of the Ethiopians, the Hermetic books at Thebes, the wisdom of Zoaster of Persia, and even the codes of the ancient Chinese sages were all derived from the land of the Brahmins. No wonder, therefore, that Pythagoras chose to go to the original source of all philosophy (i.e. India), asserted Pierre-Sylvain. The French author believed that Pythagoras learnt the central truth of all philosophy, namely 'The Soul is God', from the Indian sage Yarbas. He also believed that Yarbas had taught the Greek how to establish a community of philosophers by discerning the potential initiates whose characters are revealed in their physiognomy and by enjoining on them a vow of observing silence and of renouncing their goods and servants. The wisdom into which these prospective philosophers had to be initiated had its esoteric as well exoteric aspects. The esoteric aspect consisted of certain mystery-cults and of chanting certain magic words such as '*Tattvamasi*' and '*Aham Brahmāsmi*' whereas exoteric wisdom was concerned with the immortality of the Soul and metempsychosis as also with the punishment to be meted out to the Soul in hell on the basis of the work done on earth.

In view of the ancient classical tradition maintained by the Alexandrian scholars such as Clement, Lucian and Apuleius, who had, by no chance, been bribed or suborned by the Indian Brahmins but were rather absolutely independent thinkers and preservers of the ancient traditions, and of what Pierre-Sylvain Marechal and Schroeder have to say on the subject, I see no reason for regarding as mythical and conjectural Pythagoras's visit to India in the sixth century before the birth of Christ when sage Yājnyavalkya was enlightening the Videha King Janaka on the true identity and destiny of man. When we recall the fact that on his return to Greece, Pythagoras was acclaimed by his countrymen as a god, we are bound to admit that the acclamation was fully justified, at least in the sense that the Greek philosopher had

realized the Godhead within by adhering strictly to the practices of the ancient Brahmins such as celibacy, vegetarianism, silence and by chanting constantly the esoteric mantras such as '*So'ham*' and '*Aham Brahmāsmi*'. The objection that Pythagoras could not have reached India before 514 BC, the year of Scylax's expedition to India with the sole motive of establishing a route for a journey between Persia and India is not tenable because all the Western historians assert that there had been Aryan migrations from Persia to India several centuries before that great event and he could have easily paid a visit to India after that historic route had been well-established. Furthermore, if the court-physician Scylax could lead an expedition into the borders of India, why not the divinely gifted Pythagoras? On the issue of the Indo-Iranian migrations to India, I would like to cite the view of a modern historian—Stanley Wolpert:[15]

> The Indo-Iranians seem to have lived for some time in harmony following their long migration. By about 1500 BC, however, they appear to have split once more, and pastoral tribes known to history as the Indo-Iranians or simply Aryans, advanced still further east, across the perilous Hindu Kush Mountains, into India.

I hope all sensible readers will agree that Wolpert has articulated here only the generally held opinion on the subject. Now, if the Aryan hordes could cross the Hindu Kush and reach India in the year 1500 BC, was it impossible for an extraordinarily gifted and spiritually empowered person like Pythagoras to reach India in an age when sages were feared and revered more than earthly potentates? In my view, the hesitation of the modern Western scholars in accepting as a historic fact Pythagoras's visit to India is due, in the main, to the fact that they are not prepared to welcome the debts Greek philosophy owed to Indian philosophy before Alexander invaded India in 326 BC. For, if Pythagoras's visit to India is accepted as an accomplished fact then Plato, Aristotle and everybody else who is indebted to Pythagoras in the West

will be regarded as a debter to Indian philosophy. It is very strange indeed that writers such as George Woodcock who have no hesitation in asserting that sometime in the mythical past, India had been visited by Dionysus with a view to founding colonies in the north-west of the country, are unwilling to accept Pythagoras's visit to India on the flimsy ground that in the sixth century BC it was not possible for a Greek to come to India. In the case of Dionysus, the visit is accepted without an iota of a doubt but in the case of Pythagoras facetious objections have been raised for reasons hard to understand. I would like to know how historians of all shades and colours believe without any doubt whatsoever that in the year 975 BC a fleet of Hiram, King of Tyre reached Ophir in western India, starting its voyage from Ezion Geber at the head of the Gulf of Akaba in the Red Sea in search of 'ivory, apes, and peacocks'[16] with which to decorate the palaces of the nobles and the Temple of Solomon but why the same scholars hesitate to accept the fact that Pythagoras could also board such a ship and reach India without any difficulty. The statement in the Bible regarding the trade between India and Tyre has been regarded as a historic fact though historians are not very certain about the identity of the Indian port which the Bible calls 'Ophir'; perhaps it was 'Supārā' or Ābhīra not far from modern Mumbai (Bombay). Even if we choose to ignore the commercial and cultural connections between the Indus Valley people and the people of Mesopotamia as far back as 3000 BC or even earlier, we cannot afford to leave aside the role played by the Phoenician sailors/merchants in linking India with their land as well as with Greece. The entire Greek civilization has had Indian connections throughout its history; this can be easily corroborated by literary evidences. Greek literature right from the Homeric epics to the works of the Alexandrian scholars is full of references to India, Indian things and Indian ideas. True, the word 'India' does not occur in either of the 2 epics of Homer—*Iliad* and *Odyssey*, but both mention people or places connected with India. In the view of many Greek scholars 'Hy-

perboreans' mentioned in *Homeric Hymons* are none other than 'Uttarkurus' or the people of the Kulu valley, now in Himachal Pradesh, or the people of the Kaśmira valley, known for their peacefulness and freedom from worries. Similarly, the place 'Nysa', mentioned in *Odyssey* is doubtlessly Indian because the Greek historian-cum-geographer Strabo shows 'Nysa' as situated a little above Taxila in his map of the then known world. It is the place where the god Dionysus had been brought up secretly, secured from the designs of Hera, by 9 nymphs at the behest of Zeus. It is quite interesting to mention that Sir William Jones had identified 'Nysa' with 'Naimiṣāraṇya' of the Purāṇas. Thus, if Homer knew of 'Nysa' or 'Naimiṣāraṇya' and 'Hyperboreans' or 'Uttarkurus', it follows that he knew India quite well. E. Pocock, in his brilliant work *India in Greece*[17] has propounded a very interesting theory regarding the Greco-Indian relationship. In his view, Greece was a colony of the Indians, established after the great war called *Mahābhārata* which had taken place about 3,100 years before the birth of Christ. Pocock uses many archeological, literary and linguistic evidences to establish his wonderful thesis which explains why most of the Indian customs and practices were in vogue in the Greece of the earliest times. He has traced many names of places and persons in Homer and other poets to Sanskrit texts. The word 'Abantes' occurring in 1.535 of the second book of *Iliad*, for example, has been traced by Pocock to the Indian province of ancient times called 'Avantī', another name of Ujjain, now in Madhya Pradesh, situated at the bank of river Śiprā. Homer's 'Abantes' are matchless warriors and the soldiers of Avantī, as Kalidasa says in *Meghadūta*, I, Stanza 34, could compare favourably with the great warrior Rāvaṇa himself. I earnestly call the attention of my readers to this excellent work of Pocock, written with great honesty and candour. The arguments put forward in the book are very persuasive and compelling, especially the process discussed in the 'Appendix' at the end of the book, describing how Sanskrit words underwent transformations to assume their

Greek forms. *India in Greece*, I believe, will strengthen the thesis that very strong ties between India and Greece had existed before Alexander invaded India to such an extent that Pythagoras thought it proper to visit the wisemen of India for his initiation into the mystic lore of that country.

Hecataeus of Miletus, who flourished in the sixth century, is the earliest of the Greek geographers who wrote about the inhabitants of the then known world. He has written a lot about India and appears to have been very intimate with the country. 'Gandhar', 'Hindu Kush' and 'Indus' are the words that he uses in his description of India. After Scylax, he is, I believe, the first Greek writer known to us to have used the word 'India'. What is very surprising about his description of India is the use of the place-name 'Caspapyros' in his discussion of the river Indus. His 'Caspapyros' is evidently 'Kashyapapura'.[18] This fact alone demonstrates the thoroughness with which the Greek had studied the geography of our country much before the invasion of the northwest of India by Alexander in 326 BC. I strongly feel inclined to maintain that he had been to India and spent a considerable period of time there, studying the country's geographical conditions. Scylax and Hecataeus are no doubt the earliest informers of the West on Indian affairs.

All the 3 tragic poets of Greece provide us ample evidence of their knowledge of India and things Indian. The eldest of the trio—Aeschylus (*c.* 525 BC–*c.* 456 BC)—pays a rich tribute to India by making a character in his tragic play *The Suppliant Women* say the following:

> And tales I know, how Indian women roam
> By camels drawn, each in the tented home...(lines 284–5).

In the lines quoted here, the speaker, Pelagus, is wonderstruck by the fantastic dress of the women fleeing from their unwanted husbands who have been forced upon them by Aegysthus, the brother of their father Danaus. Danaus along with his 50 daughters has come from Egypt, seeking shelter in Argos, the kingdom of Pelagus. The suppliants are

wearing fantastic dresses which are 'un-Greek' in appearance. The strangers by their un-Greek attires recall to the mind of Pelagus the ways of the wonderful women of India who travel on camel-backs, seated in tent-shaped structures, all creating a gorgeous look. In all probability, Aeschylus has portrayed here the picture of Rajput women, mounted on camel-backs, travelling in the deserts of Rajasthan, conjuring forth a most fantastic scene through their gorgeous garments and general appearance. Aeschylus had, it seems, heard of the Rajput women from the Greek travellers, returning from Indian shores.

The second member of the trio, namely, Sophocles (*c.* 484 BC–406 BC) also provides some significant information regarding India. In his famous tragedy *Antigone* line 1038 he makes a reference to the gold of India in the speech of Creon in which Indian gold has been regarded as pure and of a much superior quality contrasted with the Lydian gold of Sardis called 'silver-gold', which has a whitish appearance due to the admixture of silver in it (in the ratio of 3 to 7). Evidently, Sophocles was aware of India's richness in gold mines, yielding pure and genuine gold. In the same play at line 907 he causes the heroine of the play, namely, *Antigone* to make a startling observation regarding the burial that she gave to her dead brother Polyneices, defying the orders of the State:

> Never had I been a mother of children, or if a husband had been mouldering in death, would I have taken this task upon me in the city's despite. What law, ye ask, is my warrant for that word? The husband lost, another might have been found, and child from another, to replace the first-born; but father and mother hidden with Hades, no brother's life could ever bloom for me again.

In the speech quoted above, husband and children have been described as of no consequence in comparison to a real brother. Antigone says that whatever she has done for her real brother, Polyneices, she would never have done for her husband or child. The thought expressed here is most un-

Greek in the considered opinion of Greek experts.[19] In their view, the thought is oriental, through and through. They are right because the original source of the thought concerned is the fifteenth verse of the 'Yuddhakānda' of Vālmīki's *Rāmāyana*:[20]

देशे देशे कलत्राणि, देशे देशे च बान्धवाः।
तं त्वहं न पश्यामि यत्र भ्राता सहोदरः।।

deśe deśe kalatrāṇi, deśe deśe ca bāṇḍhavāḥ
tam tvahaṁ na pasyāmi yatra bhrātā sahodaraḥ.

(Wives can be found in any country and relatives can be made in all countries; but I do not see a country where one could find a brother from the same womb.)

Evidently, the thought expressed by Vālmīki in the above verse had travelled to the Greece of fifth century BC and Sophocles had made poetic use of it in his immortal play, defying all barriers of time and place.

So far as references to India in the works of Euripides (480–460 BC) the third member of the trio of the Greek tragedians, are concerned, a long quotation from his immortal tragedy entitled the *Bacchae* has already been given, describing Bacchus's visit to Thebes after his long stay in the countries of the East, including India, thus alluding to the fact that Bacchus or Dionysus was originally an Indian god.

Herodotus and India

The great Greek historian Herodotus (*c.* 485–425 BC) who was a personal friend of Sophocles as well as of Pericles (*c.* 495–429 BC) (ruler of Athens between 460–429 BC), has given a very long and graphic account of India in his *Histories* in the course of his description of the extent of the empire and influence of the Persian Emperor Darius I (*c.* 550–*c.* 485 BC; King of Persia, *c.* 521–*c.* 485 BC), the object of Herodotus's reverence. It is Darius I of Persia who had subjugated a part of the north-west of India, already conquered

by his predecessor, Cyrus II the Great (*c.* 600–529 BC, King of Persia, *c.* 550–529 BC), founder of the Achaemenid dynasty in the wake of Scylax's historic expedition to India, which has been discussed earlier. This subjugation of the north-west of India by Darius I led to a long and enduring contact between Persia and India, though some contact between the two countries, as Wolpert suggests, had existed even during the reign of the Persian ruler Cyrus II when his Indian counterpart was Bimbisāra, father of Ajātaśatru.[21] It is said that Bimbisāra had been inspired by the example of the Persian emperor and had emulated him by consolidating the kingdom of Magadha. However, it was during the reign of Darius I that the north-west of India became the twentieth satrapy of the Achaemenid empire and started paying to Persia an annual tribute of 360 talents in gold dust. This information has been provided to us by Herodotus[22] who had stayed, as he claims, for several years at the Persian court. Herodotus maintains that the twentieth satrapy of the Persian empire (i.e. the north-west of India) was the richest of all satrapies of that empire. In this connection, the Greek historian refers to the gold-digging ants, which were of the size of dogs and abounded in the gold districts located near the source of the Indus. These ants, Herodotus affirms, formed their habitation underground and heaped up sand mixed with gold; when any person went to procure this golden dust, he was sure to be chased and killed by these ants if overtaken by them. It is a matter of great interest that what Herodotus tells us about the gold-digging ants is also narrated in the 'Sabhāparva' of the *Mahābhārata*.[23] So, it is just possible that the Greek historian had heard the story of the *Mahābhārata* from some Persian who had read the Indian epic either in the original Sanskrit or in its Persian version.

Herodotus mentions the fact that India is a country of many rivers and of many tongues. But he makes the error of stating from hearsay without proper verification that India was the farthest part of the inhabited world, being

bounded on the east by sandy deserts.[24] This might lead us to infer that his knowledge of India did not go beyond the Indus. But if that is the case, the question arises as to how he knew that India was the country of several languages. Moreover, he divides the Indians of his day into 3 categories:[25] 1. the *Ichthiophagoi*, who ate raw fish, inhabited marshy grounds and carried a garment of rushes; 2. the *Padnaens*, who were nomadic and ate raw flesh and among whom old and sick persons were killed for food; and lastly the *Kathaioi*, those who did not kill any life nor sowed anything but lived upon herbs and had no houses to live in and who when ill, went to the forests to lay themselves to death. Under the third category, Herodotus clearly refers to the 'Vaikhānasas' or people in the Vānaprasthāśrama stage i.e. to the sages who used to live in the forests at the very end of their lives. His description of the Indians under the first 2 categories seems to be that of what the *Mahābhārata* calls Niṣāda and Rākṣasa tribes, the aboriginal people who lived on the outskirts of the country. I am sure his description is based on the stories connected with the great epics of India—the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* which presume the two-fold division of the people of the country—Āryans and Anāryans—(i.e. those who followed the path of civilized living and those who preferred the evil path of the unrefined and uncultivated, living by violence and treachery, eating raw flesh and drinking the blood of human beings).

Another point that Herodotus highlights in his depiction of India is that a particular kind of wool that grew on trees and was far more beautiful and valuable than what was produced by sheep.[26] Clearly, he is here referring to *karpāśa* or cotton that was grown in the India of his times and is still grown profusely. He also informs us that there was an Indian contingent in the army of Darius,[27] clad in cotton garments, armed with cane bows and iron-tipped cane arrows. Thus through Herodutus, the Greek world had enriched its knowledge of India, already acquired through Pythagoras and

Scylax. Meagre, vague and hazy it may be, it is nevertheless quite authentic and valuable.

Ktesias and His Description of India

After Herodotus, the Greek writer who throws a flood of light on India is Ktesias who was for a long time the royal physician of the Persian King Artaxeraxes (*c.* 465–424 BC; *d.* 424 BC). Thus, he flourished in the late fifth century BC. He wrote a book entitled *The History of Persia* in 23 parts from which citations were made by later historians such as Diodorus Siculus and Plutarch. Ktesias also wrote a book on India. Both of his books were abridged by Photius. His *Indica*, written in about 398 BC is the first full-length description of India which has come down to us in the abridged form given to it by Photius.

Ktesias is quite familiar with the Indians and their ways of living. He describes them as just, devoted to their king and contemptuous of death. This last feature of the Indians has been pointed out several times.

It appears that Ktesias had obtained some knowledge of the Indian myths and legends, for he refers to a wonderful fountain from which water congealed to the thickness of cheese; if a certain quantity was given to a guilty person, he confessed all his transgressions.[28] Perhaps here Ktesias was thinking of the great lake called Mānasarovara on Mount Kailāsa which was believed and is still believed to remove all sins (Vide the description of Mānasarovara in śloka 4, Chapter 8 of Sabhāparva of *Mahābhārata*). Similarly, he refers to a mountain of gold in India. It seems that he had Mount Sumeru in mind which all the *Purāṇas* and also the *Mahābhārata* describe as made up of gold. But the weakness of Ktesias's account is that he seems to have accepted the Indian legends as actual facts. He talks about 4 footed birds called griffins which guarded the gold that was found on the mountain of gold and about snub-nosed pygmies who were skilful archers and whose beards and hair trailed down to their very feet. He talks about dog-faced men called

'kynokephaloi', having large and shaggy tails, living on the mountains, who wore garments of skin as well as of cotton and lived up to 200 years. In all probability, he was referring here to what Sanskrit texts have called 'Kinnaras'—horse-faced human beings living on the mountains. He refers to the *ekaipodes* or one-footed men who could hop on one leg with wonderful agility and could shade themselves with it from the sun. He also mentions the *henotiktontes* or once-bearing people whom the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* designates as 'ekagarbha'.[29] Evidently, the Greek word 'henotiktontes' is a literal translation into Greek of the Sanskrit word 'ekagarbha'. Can we infer from this that the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* had reached Persia in the fifth century BC itself? Since this is the only *Purana* and the only Indian text using the word 'ekagarbha' in the sense Ktesias uses 'henotiktontes', echoing the original Sanskrit, the inference would not be too far-fetched.

According to Ktesias, no swine, tame or wild, was to be found in India. This assertion of the Greek, on the very face of it, is groundless in view of the concept of 'Śūkarāvatāra' or 'Varāhāvatāra', indicative of the existence of hogs, swines or of boars in India. The Greek historian alludes to the unicorn ass, cups made from whose horn had the virtue of protecting the user from certain diseases and poisons. Presumably he was referring here to the rhinoceros. He says that India has a bird not bigger than the egg of a partridge whose dung first produced sleep and then death. He also describes the Indian jackal as capable of imitating the human voice and as possessing the strength of a lion and the swiftness of a horse. In his *Indica* there is a reference to the Indian monkey, the parrot, the elephant and the tiger whom the Greek author calls *martikhora* or maneater.

Ktesias describes the Indians as fair-coloured and says that they are free from toothaches, headaches, mouthsores, ulcers and opthalmia. According to him, the longevity of the Indians is 120 years though he asserts there are people in the north of India who live for 400 years.

Thus, Ktesias who had spent his years from 415 to 397 BC

in Persia as the personal physician of Artaxeraxes Mnemon, leaving his native place Knidos, was fully competent to write a book on India. He must have met the Indian soldiers in the Persian army—a fact which his predecessor Herodotus did not fail to notice—through whom he could have learnt a lot about India. The Western scholars have called Ktesias 'marvel-loving' and think his statements regarding India are fanciful and invented for the entertainment of his readers but the Greek historian recorded the facts that his informers on India had supplied. I suspect that the information he received from his informers was based on the latter's reading of the *Mahābhārata* and the *Purāṇas* which have been taken by the majority of Indians as the storehouses of historical facts. If what I state is true, then there is a proof that the *Rāmayaṇa*, the *Mahābhārata* and the *Purāṇas* had already come into existence because these are the texts which seem to have been the ultimate source of the marvel-stories of India recorded in the *Indica* of Ktesias.

Socrates and Plato: Their Knowledge of India

We now come to the age of Socrates and Plato who seem to have been fully influenced by Indian philosophy. Socrates (469–399 BC) has left nothing in his own pen but most of his teachings and beliefs have been preserved in the works of his disciples, especially the dialogues of Plato and Xenophon. Socrates is to be mentioned here because he had encountered a delegation of philosophers from India in Athens itself. It has been recorded by several Alexandrian scholars that in the year 401 BC—2 years before the death of Socrates, a delegation of Indian philosophers had paid a visit to Athens with a view to exchanging ideas on issues of mutual interest. There ensued an intellectual combat between the Greek thinkers led by Socrates on the one hand and the Indian philosophers on the other. Indians asked Socrates 'What is the scope of your philosophy?' Socrates replied: 'Man.' At this the Indians burst into laughter and said: 'How can you know man without knowing man's Creator?' The Greek party was dumb-

founded to hear this remark of the Indians. The story appears to be authentic because it correctly pinpoints the essential and basic difference between Indian philosophy on the one hand and Greek philosophy, and, for that matter, the whole of European philosophy, on the other: Indian philosophy is Brahma or God-oriented whereas man is the centre of Greek or European philosophy—we all are aware of the famous saying of Socrates: 'Man is the measure of all things.' The story of the visit of Indian scholars to Athens during the lifetime of Socrates is available in *Praeparatio Evangelica* IX.3 of the Palestinian scholar, Eusebius (*c.* AD 265–340), the author of the first scholarly work on the history of the Church and Bishop of Caesarea. Eusebius says that the story was first recorded in a treatise on the Pythagorean way of life entitled 'On the Malice of Herodotus' by Aristoxenus who was a contemporary of Alexander the Great. It must be reiterated here that Eusebius had not been bribed by any Indian to record the story narrated here; he had recorded it quite impartially with the sole objective of preserving ancient traditions for the sake of truth.

So far as Plato is concerned, there is no reference to India anywhere in his extant writings. However, of all Greek philosophers he appears to be the closest to the Indian way of thinking. Was it due to the Indian philosophers who had silenced his guru, Socrates, as reported by Eusebius? Sir William Jones, Emerson and Thoreau—all believed that Plato had drunk from the same well as the Brahmins of India.[30] In my view, Plato was very eager to be considered as an original thinker and that is why he purposely avoided referring to India, though in all probability he had been to India. We should not ignore the fact that he was a very widely travelled person of his day; he had visited Cyrene, Italy, Sicily and Egypt. Though his biographers do not say so, he is very likely to have made a journey to the Brahmins of India whose brethren had impressed very profoundly the entire Greek world by their superb intelligence and excellent conduct in 401 BC in his own city.

It would not be out of place here to place on record an ancient tradition maintained by Alexendrian scholars, according to which Plato had been to India with a view to be initiated by the Brahmins there into their philosophical lore. Apuleius, for instance, suggests in his *De Platone et Eius Dogmate* I. iii. 186-87 that Plato had planned a visit to India. However, he says that the Greek philosopher was ultimately prevented from meeting the Magi and the Indians. According to Woodcock,[31] there were some scholars in the second century of the Christian era in Alexandria who claimed that Plato, Pythagoras and Democritas—had all been to India. And we have the authority of the Christian missionary Friar Luys de Urreta who clearly and strongly maintains in his *Historia de la Aethiopia* (Valencia, 1610) that Plato had doubtless met the Brachmanes (i.e. Brahmins) in India and had been instructed by them in the mysteries of nature. I personally feel inclined to accept the view of Father Uretta because the similarities between Plato's philosophy and the Vedant philosophy of the Upanishads and of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* are so pronounced that his supposed visit to the land of the Brahmins cannot be ruled out. We would do well to refer to some of these.

First is the theory of Metempsychosis, propounded by Plato in his dialogue *Timaeus*. This theory is quite close to the theory of *punarjanma* in which every Hindu has complete faith even today. The most striking example of the closeness of Platonic ideas to Indian ideas on the question of reincarnation, as H.G. Rawlinson[32] has correctly pointed out, is to be found in the famous apologue of Er, the Pamphilian, with which Plato appropriately closes his *Republic*. Er sees the disembodied souls choosing their next incarnations at the hands of 'Lachesis, daughter of Necessity'. Orpheus chooses the body of a swan. Thersites that of an ape, Agamemnon that of an eagle. In like manner, some of the animals passed into the form of men and into one another, the unjust passing into the wild and the just into the tame. The concept of 'Lachesis' is evidently modelled on the 'karma' theory of

Indian philosophy, upheld by all schools of Hindu thought without any exception whatsoever. Plato explains the concept of 'Lachesis' very lucidly in the following passage of the *Republic*:[33]

> (The souls about to enter earth-life are thus addressed): Ye short-lived souls, a new generation of men shall here begin the cycle of its mortal existence. Your destiny shall not be allotted to you, but you shall choose it for yourselves...Virtue owns no master. He who honours her shall have more of her, and he who slights her, less. The responsibility lies with the chooser. Heaven is guiltless.

The above passage from the *Republic* appears to be a paraphrase of the following passage from the *Śvetaśvataropaniṣad* 5.11-12:[34]

> According unto his deeds the embodied one successively
> Assumes forms in various conditions.
> Coarse and fine, many in number,
> The embodied one chooses forms according to his own qualities.
> (Each) subsequent cause of his union with them is seen to be
> Because of the quality of his acts and of himself.

Both passages highlight the importance of the role played by the individual's deeds committed in the life on the earth in the assumption by him or her of a new body in the next birth; God or Fate plays no role whatsoever in this matter.

Second, Plato's thought regarding the immortality of the soul, expressed in several passages in various dialogues reminds us of the concept of the soul, enunciated in the Upaniṣads. For example, the following passage from *Meno*:[35]

> The soul, then, as being immortal, and having been born again many times, and having seen all things that exist, whether in this world or in the world below, has knowledge of them all; and it is no wonder that she

> should be able to call to remembrance all that she ever knew about virtue, and about everything; for as all nature is akin, and the soul has learned all things, there is no difficulty in her eliciting or as men say learning out of a single recollection all the rest, if a man is strenous and does not faint; for all learning and all enquiry is but recollection...

This appears to have been inspired by the following passage from *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* 4.3.9:[36]

> Verily, there are just two conditions of this person (soul): the condition of being in this world and the condition of being in the other world. There is an intermediate third condition, namely, that of being in sleep. By standing in this intermediate condition one sees both those conditions, namely being in this world and being in the other world. Now, whatever the approach is to the condition of being in the other world, by making that approach one sees the evils (of this world) and the joys (of yonder world).

Both passages bring home to us the omniscience of the soul, its awareness of all things of heaven and earth and of the underworld. The word 'Vipaścita' used in *Kathopaniṣad* 1.2.18 subsumes the ideas suggested by the entire passage from the *Meno*.

Third, Plato's assertion in his *Epistle VII*[37] in regard to the impossibility of obtaining true wisdom pertaining to the Ultimate Reality, affirming that 'it (Ultimate Reality) cannot be reduced to formulae, as with other branches of knowledge. Only as a result of long meditation on the problem itself, and of a life lived in common, is a light suddenly kindled, as it were, in the soul by a spark that leaps from another: thereafter it feeds itself.' has its source in the following passage from *Mundakopaniṣad* 3.i.8:[38]

> Not by sight is it grasped, not even by speech,
> Not by any other sense-organs, austerity, or work.

> By the peace of knowledge, one's nature purified—
> In that way, however, by meditating, one does behold Him
> who is without parts.

Fourth, the doctrine of the 3 *guṇas* of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* which pervade the phenomenal world, according to the Upanishads, has its corresponding doctrine in Plato's three-fold division of all beings: *logistikon*, *thumos* and *epithumia*. The *logistikon*, or the rational element, answers to the Upaniṣadic notion of *sattva*, which harmonizes the soul and illuminates it. *Thumos*, like *rajas* of the Upaniṣads, is the element of passion and power, and stands midway between ignorance and knowledge. And Plato's notion of *epithumia*, quite like the concept of *tamas* of the Upaniṣads, represents blind desire, dullness and ignorance.

Fifth, in his discussion of the soul in *Phaedrus*, 246.25, Plato uses the imagery of a chariot and steeds, and this imagery readily reminds us of the same imagery used in the *Kathopaniṣad* 3.3–9. I quote the relevant passage from Plato's *Phaedrus*:[39]

> We will liken the soul to the composite nature of a pair of winged horses and a charioteer.... Such is the life of the gods; but of the other soul, that which best follows after God and is most like Him, raises the head of the charioteer up into the outer region and is carried round in the revolution, troubled by the horses and hardly beholding the realities; and another sometimes rises and sometimes sinks, and, because its horses are unruly, it sees some things and fails to see others. The other souls follows after, all yearning for the upper region but unable to reach it, are carried round beneath, trampling upon and colliding with one another, each striving to pass its neighbour...

Now, let us have a look at the passage from the Upaniṣad[40] concerned:

Know thou the soul as riding in a chariot,
The body as the chariot.
Know thou the intellect as the chariot-driver,
And the mind as the reins.

The senses, they say, are the horses;
The objects of sense, what they range over
The self combined with senses and mind
Wise men call 'the enjoyer'.

He who has not understanding,
Whose mind is not constantly held firm—
His senses are uncontrolled,
Like the vicious horses of a chariot-driver.

He, however, who has understanding,
Whose mind is constantly held firm—
His senses are under control,
Like the good horses of a chariot-driver.

He, however, who has not understanding,
Who is unmindful and even pure,
Reaches the goal
From which he is born no more.

He, however, who has the understanding of a chariot-driver,
A man who reins in his mind—
He reaches the end of his journey,
The highest place of Vishṇu.

I believe that here is an unmistakable clue on the basis of which we can firmly maintain that the Greek philosopher had undoubtedly some knowledge of the Upanishads which he creatively used in his dialogues. In the present case he has, of course, introduced some innovation by depicting the steeds as 'winged' but the tenor of thought is the same as in the *Kathopaniṣad*. No Keith can deny this.[41]

Sixth, the Hindu view of *māyā* finds its equivalent in Plato's concept of ignorance. Indeed, the Hindu doctrine

of *māyā* has been interpreted in terms of ignorance which consists in the individual's identification of herself with his or her body, the representative of the phenomenal world. On the other hand, knowledge consists in the realization that the Self is not different from the Godhead (Brahma) but is Brahma Himself. When this realization descends on the individual and he starts identifying himself with the Godhead within, he or she achieves *mokṣa* or release from the cycle of births and deaths constituting *samsāra* or the phenomenal world. It is very interesting to note that Plato thought precisely on these Hindu lines on the subject. I cite below 2 passages—one from *MaitrīUpanishad* 4.2 and the other from Plato's *Phaedo* 82.33, having bearing on the subject, employing the imagery of prison and fetters. I first quote the passage from *Phaedo*:[42]

> Every seeker after wisdom knows that up to the time when philosophy takes it over, his soul is a helpless prisoner, chained hand and foot in the body, compelled to view reality not directly but through its prison-bars, and wallowing in utter ignorance.
>
> And philosophy can see that imprisonment is ingeniously effected by the prisoner's own active desire, which makes him first accessory to his own confinement. Well, philosophy takes over the soul in this condition and by gentle persuasion tries to set it free.

Let us now see how close it is to the passage from *Maitrī Upanishad*. The passage runs as follows:[43]

> (Discussing the condition of the individual wrapped in ignorance and bound to the cycle of births and deaths, Kratu Prajāpati tells Vālākhilyas as reported by Ṣākāyana to King Bṛhdratha)
>
> Like a lame man, bound with the fetters of the fruits of good and evil; like the condition of one in prison, lacking independence; like the condition of one in the realm of death—in a condition of great fear; like one

> intoxicated with liquor—intoxicated with delusion; like one seized by an evil being—rushing, hither and thither; like one bitten by a great snake—bitten by the objects of sense; like gross darkness—the darkness of passion; like jugglery—consisting of illusion; like a dream—falsely apparent; like the pith of a banana-tree—unsubstantial; like an actor—in temporary dress; like a painted scene—falsely delighting the mind.

The first part of the quotation from *Phaedo*, cited earlier, appears to be a paraphrase of the Upanishadic passage, just cited. And as regards the thought of the second part of the passage from *Phaedo*, the source appears to be the headings to the third and the fourth paragraphs of the fourth Prapāṭhaka of the same Upanishad (i.e. *MaitrīUpaniṣad*), namely, 'The Antidote: Study of the Veda, Performance of One's Own Duty, and Austerity' (The heading of Paragraph 3) and 'Knowledge of Brahma, Austerity and Meditation: The Means of Union with the Soul' (The heading of Paragraph 4). Clearly, the depiction of the condition of the individual soul's earthly existence and the suggested method of release or liberation in both texts (i.e. the *Phaedo* and the *MaitrīUpaniṣad*) are precisely identical. It would not be out of place to note here that Plato's contemptuous view of the human body which for a normal Greek counted for a great deal, was, in all probability, inspired by the first Prapāṭhaka of the *MaitrīUpanishad*. Indeed, to a sensitive reader, the criticism of the human body that permeates the atmosphere of the *Phaedo* at once reminds of a similar criticism of the body presented in the *MaitrīUpanishad*.

There is no end to the parallels between Plato's dialogues on the one hand and the Upanishads on the other. These parallels lead us to believe that the Greek philosopher was an ardent lover of the Hindu texts whose philosophy he seems to have imbibed very thoroughly. What he at one place calls 'secret songs'[44] were the Hindu texts. The fact that he was a Pythagorean of a very high order provides support to our view that he was highly influenced by the thoughts of the Up-

anishads. George Woodcock's view seems to be conclusive:[45]

> There are, in fact, too many similarities to be explained away by mere coincidence, and while Plato doubtless borrowed and adapted some of his ideas from Pythagoras, the possibility that he knew a great deal about Indian philosophy from more immediate sources cannot be rejected.

I would like to point out certain other circumstances supportive of our thesis regarding Plato's connections with India. The tradition mentioned in Eusebius regarding the visit of certain Indian philosophers to Athens in the year 401 BC and their discussion with Greek philosophers led by Socrates is also alluded to in the fragments of the dialogues of Aristotle, written during the philosopher's early career. His biographer Diogenes Laertius of the early third century AD has preserved these fragments in his famous biographical study entitled *Lives and Opinions of the Eminent Philosophers.*[46] The great Greek scholar Werner Jaeger holds that these fragments throw a flood of light on Aristotle's surprising interest in certain features of Oriental religions.[47] Now, if Aristotle, who was basically a rationalist, felt attracted towards Indian religion, it is inconceivable that the great mystic, Plato, remained uninfluenced by it. Diogenes Laertius mentions the interesting fact that Eudoxus, the Greek astronomer and friend of Plato, was greatly interested in Indian thought. I suspect that this mathematician-cum-astronomer (*c.* 408–355 BC) had derived his conception of 27 concentric spheres, each revolving on its own axis, from the astronomical works of India which postulate 27 *nakṣatras*: *Aśviṇi*, *Bharanī*, *Krttikā*, *Rohiṇī* et al. The Elder Pliny (Gaius Plinius Secundus), Roman administrator and author of a 37-book study called *Naturalis Historia* alludes to this fact.[48] These are some of the significant facts which compel us to affirm that Plato was acquainted with the main tenets of Hindu philosophy as enshrined in the *Upanishads.* Stutfield makes a very honest admission:[49] 'The

mind of Plato was heavily charged with Orphic mysticism, mainly derived from Asiatic sources. India, always the home of mystical devotion probably contributed the major share.' Wiliam Ralph Inge, too, observes, and in a very uninhibited manner:[50]

> This mystical faith (i.e. born in India) appears in Greek lands as Orphism and Pythagoreanism. In Europe, as in Asia, it was associated with ideas of the transmigration of souls and a universal law of periodical recurrence. But it is in Plato, the disciple of the Pythagoreans as well as of Socrates, who was probably himself the head of a Pythagorean group at Athens, that this conception of an unseen eternal world of which the visible world is only a pale copy, gains a permanent foothold in the West.

Thus, Father Inge very candidly accepts that the roots of Platonic system are to be found in Indian philosophy as it is put forth in the *Upanishads.*

In this way Plato emerges from the argument presented in the preceding paragraphs as an early channel of the transmission of the mystical thought of the Upanishads in the Western world. Pythagoras, before him, had imbibed the philosophy of the Hindus but then he left no works of his own for the guidance of the posterity; he left only groups of his followers who propagated his faith, Socrates and Plato being most important of them. But Plato must be credited with having advanced the cause of Pythagoreanism and ultimately of Hinduism epitomized in the *Upanishads* by means of his voluminous works, which clearly elaborate on the metaphysical ideas of the Hindu texts, adapting them sometimes to the local conditions of Greece. The American transcendentalist, Ralph Waldo Emerson, said:[51] 'Mysticism finds in Plato all its texts.' But the American mystic's statement is true only of the Western mysticism, for the ultimate source of all mysticism, including that of Plato, is, beyond any doubt whatsoever, the large mass of *Upanishadic* literature, a con-

siderable part of which Plato had read. Even the dialogue form of expressing philosophical ideas he had learnt from the *Upaniṣads*, of course, in the process rendering it more dramatic and effective.

Aristotle and India

After Plato, the greatest philosopher that the Greek world produced was undoubtedly Aristotle (384–322 BC), pupil of Plato and tutor to the Macedonian prince who was to be the conqueror of the then known world—Alexander the Great (356–323 BC), son of Philip II, King of Macedonia. It is common knowledge that in the beginning Aristotle was mystical and idealistic like his guru, but gradually shifted towards a scientific and analytical philosophy. This finds support from his surprising interest in the religious thought of India, as the fragments of his lost dialogues, preserved in the work of his biographer Diogenes Laertius, clearly reveal. It seems that he was enamoured of the Indian sages so much so that he asked his royal pupil to bring some of them when the latter returned from India. And it was this wish of the guru that had prompted the Macedonian conqueror of the north-west of India to take Kalonos, an Indian gymnosophist,[52] with him. However, as the Greek historians and writers, including Plutarch, have reported, the wish of the guru could not be fulfilled as neither the Indian gymnosophist (the naked *nāgā* or Jain *saṁnyāsī* whose Sanskrit name seems to have been 'Kalyāṇānanda') nor the disciple himself could return to Greece. But this, at all events, proves Aristotle's deep interest in India, which seems to have created a very great impact on the Greek philosopher. Sir William Jones,[53] quite interestingly, believed that Aristotelian logic and metaphysics are based on the Nyāya school of Indian philosophy, founded by the great sage Gautam. So far as this view of Jones is considered, I find it quite plausible. There are numerous factors responsible for this speculation of Jones. References to India in the works of Aristotle are numerous indeed; I shall mention some of them in a short while. Here, I would like to

refer to his most significant statement regarding India made in the *Politics* 1332 b 24, where on the authority of Scylax, the eminent Greek philosopher mentions the fact that in India, the ruling classes can be easily distinguished from the subjects (i.e. the ruled) by their external features—a thing quite strange to the Greek people to whom the rulers and the ruled looked all alike in their physical appearance. This reference to India in an extent and significant work of the Stagirite is proof positive of the fact the philosopher had collected a considerable amount of information about Indian affairs, prior to his pupil's invasion of that country in 326 BC. This makes it quite possible that he had derived his syllogism from the Nyāya system of India, reducing the number of its members (*avayavas*) from 5 to 3. The classic example of the syllogism of the Nyāya system is the following:

1. The hill is fiery;
2. for it smokes;
3. whatever smokes is fiery;
4. this hill smokes
5. therefore, this hill is fiery

The 5 members of this syllogism are called *pratijnā* or proposition; *hetu* or reason; *udāharaṇa* or *nidarśana* or example; *upanaya* or minor premise; and *nigamana* or conclusion (i.e. *prtijnā* or proposition re-stated as proved). Aristotle, it is clear, regarded the fourth and the fifth members of the Indian syllogism as superfluous being repetitions of the second and the first. This is why he accepted only the first 3 members of the syllogistic method of India. If syllogism was, as Russel asserts, 'Aristotle's most important work in logic',[54] credit should go to India's Nyāya school from which it is ultimately derived. The lowest limit of the age of Gautam, the founder of the Nyāya school, according to Western scholars, is fifth century BC, though the Indian tradition assigns him a period several centuries earlier than this. Even if Gautam flourished in the fifth century BC, he could very

well have influenced Aristotle who was later than the former by at least 100 years.

But the question is: 'How did Aristotle learn the system of the Nyāya school?' The answer is through his compatriot Democritus (*c.* 460–*c.* 370 BC), who was a contemporary of Socrates and who had travelled to far distant countries including India where he had learnt, in all probability, the atomic theory of the formation of the Universe from the Vaiśeṣic school of Kaṇāda (literally atom-eater) who was a contemporary of Gautam. Regarding Democritus's visit to India, Professor Dudley uses the word 'perhaps'.[55] But that in itself speaks volumes for the Greek's visit to India. Now, Aristotle knew Democritus very well as references to the latter in the extant works of the former clearly prove. It is quite possible that Democritus learnt the philosophy of the Nyāya school along with that of the Vaiśeṣic school, for the 2 schools of Indian philosophy have always been bracketed together and regarded as sister schools. The atomic theory propounded by Democritus resembles the atomic theory of the Vaiśeṣic school to such an extent that one is constrained to acknowledge the indebtedness of the Greek to the school of Kaṇāda simply because Kaṇāda's system existed in the fifth century BC when Democritus is likely to have visited India. One very decisive proof of the influence on Aristotle of the Vaiśeṣic system via Democritus is the fact that the Greek philosopher regarded the number of the basic elements of the world not as 4 (accepted by the majority of the Greeks) but as 5 in accordance with the Indian tradition; this fifth element is what Indians call *ākāśa* and what Aristotle called 'ether'. This information is available in his biography supplied by Diogenes Laertius.[56] My thesis regarding the impact of the syllogism of the Nyāya on that of Aristotle gets some support from the fact that of the several forms of syllogism such as 'Celerent', 'Darii', 'Ferio', etc., known to the scholastics (schoolmen) of the Middle Ages in Europe, one form was called 'Barbara', a denomination which indicated the foreign origin of that form of syllogism. It is remarkable that it is

the Barbara form of syllogism that Aristotle had adopted. This clearly shows that in the view of the schoolmen of the Middle Ages, the Aristotelian syllogism was of foreign origin and it is common knowledge that India was regarded by the Greeks and later by the Europeans as a whole as a country of barbarians. Thus, by the term 'Barbara' the schoolmen presumably meant 'Indian'. The classic example of the 'Barbara' syllogism is the following:

1. All men are mortal. (Major premise)
2. Socrates is a man. (Minor premise)
3. Therefore: Socrates is mortal. (Conclusion)

Sensible readers will not fail, I am sure, to perceive the closeness of this method of reasoning with the method of reasoning, made popular by the philosophers of the Nyāya school; the only difference is that the Aristotelian or Barbara syllogism has dispensed with the last 2 members of its reasoning, treating them to be redundent.

We will do well to remind ourselves here of another point in appreciating Aristotle's affinity with India: his categories and causes have an admirable and unmistakable closeness with their Indian counterparts in the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika schools. The great Orientalist, Monier Williams, has very clearly discussed them in his brilliant work entitled *Indian Wisdom*.[57]

The extent of Aristotle's knowledge regarding things Indian can be gauged from the following references abounding in his works:

1. In his book called *Problems* he mentions the fact that in India some men live in the forests whereas others in houses located in cities and villages just as there are some kinds of dogs to be found in Indian villages whereas others are to be found in the homes of people in villages and cities. Perhaps, by the expression 'wild men' he meant *ṛṣis* and *munis* and people in the third stage of life called 'Vānaprastha'.
2. In his book on metals and minerals entitled *Metallurgy* he says that there is a copper to be found in India which

looks so much like gold that it is very difficult to make a distinction between this copper and gold.

3. In his book on animals called *De Anima* he refers to a kind of ass with horns to be found in Indian jungles.

In view of these varied references to India in the works of the Stagirite, no scholar will, I am sure, brush aside the thesis presented here regarding Aristotle's debts to the Nyāya and Vaiśesika schools of Indian philosophy.

India and Some Other Eminent Greek Philosophers

Besides Pythagoras, Plato and Aristotle, there are some more Greek philosophers, too, who appear to have been influenced by Indian philosophy. The Eleatic school of monists such as Xenophanes (*c.* 570 BC–*c.* 460 BC), Parmenides (fl. *c.* 450 BC), and Zeno of Elea (fl. *c.* 450 BC)—all seem to have been influenced by the monist philosophy of the Upanishads. Similarly, Empedocles (*c.* 493–*c.* 433 BC) and Anaxagoras (*c.* 500–*c.* 428 BC) seem to have some traces of the Sāmkhya school of Indian philosophy that the Sage Kapil is believed to have founded. I would like to quote Herbert H. Gowen on this rather complex and controversial issue:[58]

> The doctrines of the Eleatics, such as Xenophanes and Parmenides, that God and the Universe are one, and that thinking—and being are identical, seem to savour of the upanishads and the Vedānta. The doctrine of Thales that the universe originated from the element of water, also seems to have affinity with early Indian ideas. The teaching of Empedocles that matter is eternal and indistructible, is quite in accord with the teachings of Saṁkhya. Tawny declares, indeed that he (i.e. Empedocles) has made as near an approach as a Greek could make to the doctrines of Hindu philosophy. Indeed, his personality was almost as much Hindu as Greek.

Thus, Indian influence on Greek philosophy is not confined to 1 or 2 names only; it is quite pervasive. And this influence

was not the product of Alexander's invasion of India; it existed from the very beginning of Greek philosophical thought, and was naturally felt by the later thinkers in the West.

Alexander, the Great and India's Impact on Greece Through Him

After Aristotle, his disciple deserves our utmost attention in this short story of the East–West encounter. The episode in the history of the world known as Alexander's invasion of the north-west of India in the year 326 BC is known full-well to every student of history all over the globe. This invasion of India proved to be epoch-making because it brought the East and the West face-to-face on a grand scale. Until this event only some lucky individuals had been able to reach India or Greece but now a political relationship was established between the two counties with the result that an age of free exchange of ideas was born. Indians learnt from the Greeks a peculiar form of sculpture known as Gāndhāra art in which Lord Buddha was depicted as if he were the Greek god Apollo. But Greece stood to a much greater advantage. Alexander had brought with him quite a good number of philosophers, full of curiosity about Indian wisdom which they learnt and carried to their country for the benefit of their fellow-citizens. We should recall here the fact that Aristotle had asked Alexander to bring with him some wise men when he returned from India because he had heard a lot about them and their ideas but had had no chance of meeting one face-to-face. Alexander failed to fulfil the wish of his guru because neither he nor the wise man of India called 'Kalanos' who was accompanying the Greek conqueror could reach the Greek shores. Fortunately, however, the philosopher-friends that Alexander had brought with him to India survived to record their experiences in India for all posterity. Three of them are very famous for their memorable records of the Indian way of life: Nearchus, Onesicritus and Aristobulos. Nearchus (d. 312 BC) of Crete was a remarkable Greek sailor whom Alexander had appointed as an admiral of

his fleet. At Alexander's request he made a voyage from the mouth of the Indus to the head of the Persian Gulf in ships built for use in rivers rather than on the ocean. His account of this voyage, which also had a detailed account of India and her people was later used by historians like Arrian (Flavius Arrianus, second century AD) and Strabo (64/53 BC–after AD 21). Onesicritus (d. sometime in the third century BC) of Astypalea was a cynic philosopher whom Alexander had appointed as his chief pilot, second in command to Nearchus. He wrote a biography of the great conqueror in which he provided an account of India and the Gymnosophists (naked wisemen) whom he had interviewed in Taxila. Aristobulos (fl. *c.* 320 BC) was personally associated with the great Macedonian throughout his campaign in the East and wrote a history of that campaign on a grand scale which Arrian and Strabo used in their respective books. India occupied a significant part in this history. Apart from these 3 officer-cum-writers, there was a true established philosopher in the company of Alexander. His name was Pyrrho (*c.* 360 to *c.* 270 BC). Of his own accord he had accompanied Alexander with the sole desire of coming face-to-face with the Indian philosophers of whom he had heard a great deal in Greece. He belonged to Elis. He was on the staff of scientists whom Alexander had brought for the purpose of making a scientific survey of the lands conquered by him, and of acquiring knowledge in India. Besides Pyrrho, the scientists who had accompanied Alexander were, *inter alia*, Callisthenes (d. 328 BC), the nephew of Aristotle, and Anaxarchus. Callistenes could not reach India; he became a scapegoat for a plot against Alexander at Bactria and was either slayed or allowed to languish to death on account of his extreme outspokenness. His account of Alexander's campaign thus remained incomplete, he having died in 328 BC. Anaxarchus reached India, but did not live to take back to Greece what he had learnt there; returning by boat after Alexander's death, he was shipwrecked off the coast of Cyprus and the King of Cyprus, Nicocreon, had him impounded to death in a stone mortar for the past

offence of a rude remark made by the philosopher against him. Only Pyrrho survived the ardours of the grand compaign that lasted for 11 years, and the perils of philosophic frankness. He returned to Elis, his native city, where he founded the sceptic school of philosophy. Unfortunately, he wrote no books, but his oral teachings have been recorded by his followers. According to Russel, 'He is said to have maintained that there could never be any rational ground for preferring one course of action to another.'[59] He was highly influenced by the philosophy of non-violence upheld by the Jain and Buddhist sages of the India of his day. George Woodcock frankly says about the impact of Indian philosophy on Pyrrho:

> In the doctrines of inaction and of indifference to all external things, which are in themselves indifferent and equal in value and non-value, Pyrrho developed in the early third century BC a philosophy nearer in essentials, and even in details, to the doctrines current in India among Jain and Buddhist teachers than to any Greek system of thought before the neo-Platonists.

Wilfried Noelle Helmuth von Glasenapp supports Woodcock but he holds that apart from Jainism and Buddhism, another school of Indian philosophy called *Ajnānavāda* had also created a great impact on Pyrrho. Thus, after Pythagoras, Plato and some other early Greek philosophers like Empedocles and Parmenides, Pyrrho was a philosopher from the groves of Greece most profoundly influenced by the wisdom of India. About his actual meetings with the Indian sages there is no dispute whatsoever.

Alexander himself has left behind, in his own pen, deeply moving accounts of India. He was a very well-read and philosophical-minded ruler who had the zeal of establishing a world-government and a world-religion. The Greek biographer and essayist Plutarch (*c.* AD 46–*c.* 127) in his work on the life of Alexander has provided many details of the Macedonian's mind and heart, who was an excellent writer

in his own right. Alexander's extant *Epistles* reveal his excellence as a stylist. Plutarch has cited many passages from these *Epistles* in his 'Life of Alexander'. The account of the famous battle between Porus and Alexander has also been given in these 'epistles'; this throws a flood of light on the then warmanship of the Indians of the day and on the personality of Porus, his imposing physical charms and highly dignified behaviour. Alexander's *Epistles* along with the accounts provided by Nearchus and others must have aroused a lot of interest in India in the minds of the Greeks. As I have said earlier, the later Greek historians and geographers depended largely on these memoirs of India left behind by Alexander and his companions. Arrian (second century AD), Strabo (64 BC–AD 21), Diodorus Siculus (fl. 60–30 BC), and the Roman historian Quintus Curtius Rufus (fl. AD *c.* 50)–all made use of these memoirs in their accounts of India and her culture.

Megasthenes and India

We should not ignore the reports on India provided by another Greek scholar who came to India and resided there for quite some time as a Greek ambassador in the court of Chandragupta Maurya, the founder of a glorious dynasty in India, namely, the Mauryan dynasty. This Greek was Megasthenes, the ambassador of Seleucus who was the representative of the Greek power in the Middle East. After the departure of Alexander from India, Chandragupta (Sandracottus of the Greek historians) succeeded in establishing a big empire in India by putting to an end the tyrannical and corrupt Nanda dynasty of Magadh. The Indian emperor came into conflict with Seleucus whom he defeated and whose daughter he subsequently married. Seleucus sent Megasthenes to the Indian court at Polibothra (modern Patna) to strengthen his ties with the Indian emperor. The Greek ambassador is famous for his history of India as he saw it with his own eyes, called *Indica* which was of great use for the Greek historians like Arrian, Strabo and Diodorus. The accounts of India given

by the companions of Alexander were no doubt first-hand but they were limited by the incomplete vision of the writers who could never reach the Gangetic plains. The account of Megasthenes was, however, free from this limitation; it was full and complete simply because the Greek ambassador had time enough to see the Indian way of life from close quarters and develop his perception of India satisfactorily. Moreover, he was staying at Polibothra which represented the comprehensive view of India. It is really very unfortunate that all accounts of India by the companions of Alexander as well as that of Megasthenes are now lost; only fragments of these accounts are available today, preserved in the writings of Arrian, Strabo and Curtius. Brief comments on the works of these writers will be in order.

Strabo was born at Amaseia in the year 64 or 63 BC into a very wealthy family. He was widely travelled, mostly in Asia Minor and Egypt, besides his repeated visits to Rome. The native city of Strabo, that is, Amaseia, was an important city of Pontus, an ancient country of north-eastern Asia Minor, occupying what is now the Turkish Black Seacoast, east of the Kizil Irmak. Strabo had collected a very large amount of information in the course of his wide travels. He first put this information in the form of a book on history which unfortunately has not survived; what has survived of his writings is his 17-book *Geography* which he had published for the first time in 7 BC. Book 15 of his *Geography* deals with India, her people, her surroundings and her culture quite in detail, quoting Megasthenes frequently.

Arrian (Flavius Arrianus) flourished in the second century of the Christian era. He was born in Nichmedia in Bithynia, an ancient district of north-western Asia Minor which had become a Roman province in 74 BC. Arrian became the governor of Cappadocia, a high plateau region in eastern Turkey, under the Roman rule of Hadrian. He was the pupil of the famous Stoic philosopher, Epictetus (*c.* AD 55–135) whose works he collected and published, after his death. Arrian was a prolific writer, having written several books. But the book

that is relevant to our purpose is entitled *Anabasis* which is in 8 volumes. The eighth volume of this book constitutes Arrian's *Indica*, dealing as it does with India, Indian people and Indian culture in the course of its depiction of the progress of the Macedonian fleet from the Indus to Susa. Arrian heavily depends on Megasthenes's *Indica*.

Diodorus Siculus (fl. 60–30 BC) was born in Agyrium in Sicily. A Greek historian of great consequence, he is famous for his history of the Mediterranean world entitled *The Library of History* written in 40 volumes, beginning with a description of the mythological times to the age of Cicero. The only books that have survived in their entirety are Books I–V (legendary material and folklore) and books XI–XX, dealing with the period 480–302 BC. The rest of his book has survived only in excerpts or paraphrases preserved in Byzantine and medieval collections. Books XIX–XXI throw light on India. Book II refers to the worship of Dionysus and Hercules in India and to the fact that Polibothra (identified with modern Patna) was founded by Hercules.

Quintus Curtius Rufus (fl. *c.* AD 50) is famous as the author of *The History of Alexander the Great* in 10 volumes, of which first 2 and parts of the others are lost. The work of this Roman historian is of special interest because it provides many details about India not to be found elsewhere.

Plutarch (*c.* AD 46–*c.* 127) was born in Chaeronea in Boeotia, a region in central Greece, north-east of the Gulf of Corinth. He was a great biographer and essayist. He is most famous for his *Parallel Lives*, containing biographies of 50 Greek and Roman personalities. In his *Life of Alexander* he provides a lot of information on India. Apart from the details of the encounters of the numerous tribes of the north-west of India, Plutarch records very graphically the philosophical exchanges that had taken place between Alexander on the one hand and on the other, the Indian Gymnosophists who had been arrested by the Macedonian army on account of their incitement of a tribe called Sabbas to revolt against the foreigners. Their wise answers to the 10 questions of Alexander

won them their release. This was Alexander's foretaste of the wisdom of the Indian sages. Inspired by this experience, the Greek conqueror sent Onesicritus to the sages, held in the highest esteem by the Indians. This resulted in the meeting between Onesicritus and Kalanos and then between Onesicritus and Dandamis. Ultimately, Kalanos agreed to accompany Alexander to Greece but as luck would have it, Kalanos fell ill on the way and he, as per the requirement of his religion (the requirement being that a sage should abandon a sick body), burnt himself in full view of the Greek army without even a sigh at Susa, Persia. This careless acceptance of death by the Indian sage, Plutarch emphasizes, had impressed the Greeks very profoundly. The Greek biographer also gives the correct name of the sage as 'Sphines' and says that he was called 'Kalanos' by the Greeks on account of his salutation to his visitors—'Kalyāṇa' (or 'may you be well'). It would indeed, be a very rewarding and delightful reading if the images of India provided in the works of Strabo, Arrian, Diodorus, Curtius, Plutarch, etc., could be made available in one place in their entirety. Those interested in the subject will be well-advised to read the original texts in their English translation, of course, for fuller enjoyment; there they will find numerous details regarding the foreign perception of the advancement made by India in scientific, technological, religious, intellectual and spiritual spheres. An example will, I believe, be in order. About the philosophical level of Indian women in his day, Megasthenes, as cited by Strabo in his *Geography* XV.71 says: 'The study of philosophy and medicine was in great favour among the Brahmins *and even women were versed in metaphysics.*' (emphasis added)

Indo-Greek Relations after Megasthenes

After Megasthenes, the Greeks sent Daimachus to the court of the Mauryan emperor, Bindusara, father of Ashoka the Great. This new ambassador from the Greeks to the Indian court is also said to have written a book on India as he saw her. Unfortunately, his *Indica*, too, met the same fate

as that of his predecessor.

According to Polybius (*c.* 203?–*c.* 120 BC), the Greek historian of Megalopolis, a second invasion of India by the Greeks was made in 206 BC by Antiochus the Great and the Indian king Sophagasena (i.e. Subhagasena) was compelled to enter into a treaty of peace with the Greeks (*Pol.* XI. 34). Dr D.R. Bhandarkar was of the view that 'Subhagasena' was the epithet of the Mauryan king, reigning in India in 206 BC whose actual name was 'Salisuka'. This fits the facts presented by Polybius, the author of the 400-book volume on the history of the Mediterranean world.

Apart from this interlude in the history of Indo-Greek relationship, let us mention some facts of the main action. After the death of Chandragupta Maurya, his son Bindusāra ascended the Mauryan throne. History books very often refer to his letter to the Hellenistic Greek King Antiochus I, the grandfather of the Antiochus, mentioned in the preceding paragraph–the Greek who had compelled 'Subhagasena' to enter into a peace treaty in 206 BC. In his letter Bindusara had asked the Greek king to kindly send to him some wine, some raisins and a Sophist. Antiochus sent the wine and the raisins but about the Sophist said wryly: 'In Greece it is not done to trade in philosophers.' Indians and Greeks had a very high regard for each other during this period. Bindusāra's son, Ashoka the Great, it must be mentioned, had appointed one of the Greeks—Tuṣāṣpa—as one of his governors at Aparant in the region of Saurashtra. This should be treated as the measure of Indian trust and respect for the Greeks. The Indian king had sent missions to far distant Greek kings for the spread of Buddhism. According to his Thirteenth Major Rock Edict, he had sent his envoys to the lands of Ptolemy Philadelphus of Egypt, Antigonus Gonatus of Macedonia, Alexander of Epirus and Magas of Cyrene. It is heartening to note that Buddhism was quite acceptable to the Greeks. One of their kings, Menander, as the Buddhist text *Milindpanha* reveals, had embraced the Buddhist faith. This Menander was the son of Agocles and was born in 180 BC. His

capital was Taxila and he ruled over western Punjab, Gandhara and Sindha. The effect of this mutually sympathetic and friendly relation between the Greeks and the Indians is clearly reflected in Hellenistic poetry. H.J. Rose calls our attention to some scraps of Greek poetry like the *Alexandrine Erotic Fragments* in which a girl laments the faithlessness of her lover in the form of a ballad; what is distinctly interesting about this verse is that the girl is Greek and her lover is an Indian. More interesting than this is a little farce in prose in which, in the words of Rose, 'The situation is a kind of parody on the line of *Iphigenia in Tauris*; a Greek girl is living among Indians, and her friends carry her off, after complications in which the Indian king and his retinue take a prominent part, while a clown continually breaks into the action with remarks and inarticulate sounds, not always of the most refined.'[61] In a footnote, added to this statement, Rose remarks: 'The Indians speak something which is intended for an Indian language; Kannarese has been suggested but apparently on insufficient grounds.' This is clearly quite symptomatic of the intimate relationship that existed between India and the Hellenistic world before the Christian era.

Visits of Two more Greek Philosophers to India

As a result of the friendly relationship that came to exist between the 2 great countries—India and Greece—before the Christian era, India continued to attract sage after sage from Greece. Two very eminent names must be placed on record: Apollonius of Tyana and Plotinus. The first was a neo-Pythagorean sage and thaumaturge whose biography was written by Flavius Philostratus (*c.* AD 170–*c.* 245) at the request of his patroness Julia Domna, the Roman Empress, an admirer of the great sage. Apollonius was a contemporary and rival of Christ. Naturally, the Christian scholars of Alexandria, who were very influential in scholarly circles of the day, tried to portray him most unfavourably as a spiritual charlatan. Except for a few letters that the sage wrote to

different people, there is no work by him available today expounding his philosophy. We know him through his life written by Philostratus.[62] He was born at Tyana in Cappadocia in eastern Turkey. He became a wandering holy man, visiting Egypt, Persia and India, and later Rome and Greece. He lived a very long life and was at last 'translated to heaven'. A cult of Apollonius developed in Asia, Greece and Syria as a counterblast to Christianity.

Philostratus's *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* is a very delightful and interesting document which pays a very high tribute to Indian philosophy. It describes with very vivid details how Apollonius had come to India and visited the Greek-knowing king of Taxila called Pharotes (to be identified with Parvateśvara) with whose recommendation he had learnt *yoga-vidyā* at the feet of the Indian sage, Iarchus (to be identified with *yogi* Yājnyavalkya, not to be confused with the sage Yājnavalkya, the contemporary of King Janaka of Mithilā) who had his *ashrama* on 'the hill of the sages' in Kashmir. Apollonius returns a truly wise man, virtually a god, after being initiated by Iarchus into *yoga-vidyā*.[63]

There was a time when Philostratus's book was looked down upon as a book of romance, having no historic substance whatsoever. But now researches have proved the veracity of the details, given of Taxila and of Iarchus. Moreover, the words that have been put in the mouth of Iarchus are faithfully representative of the mystical traditions of India. Furthermore, Philostratus maintains throughout that he has invented nothing; all his descriptions are based on the reports meticulously preserved by Damis, the Syrian, who had accompanied Apollonius to India and had remained with him in all interviews the Greek sage held with Iarchus. I see no reason to dispute the status of *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana* as a faithful biography.[64]

So far as the visit of Plotinus to India is concerned, the subject has remained controversial and has not been settled finally. A majority of the Western scholars assert that he had definitely planned to visit the Brahmins of India for his spiri-

tual enrichment but then his plan remained unrealized owing to the murder in 244 AD in Mesopotamia of the Emperor Gordian III who had led the expedition against Persia which Plotinus had joined with a view to reaching India, and, of course, the Brahmins there. However, his philosophy, in its essence, is so close to the Vedāntic philosophy of India that the Indian influence cannot be denied at any cost. The great scholar, J.F. Staal has very competently brought out the area of agreement between the philosophy of Plotinus's *Enneads* and that of Bādarāyana's *Brahmasūtra*.[65] The Western scholars who maintain that the plan of Plotinus failed to materialize owing to the murder of Emperor Gordian III, clearly ignore the fact that Plotinus could visit India even without the help of Gordian; like Apollonius of Tyana and Pantaenus, he could have easily reached India, particularly when he had already come up to Persia. Moreover, his compiler, disciple and biographer, Porphyry, in his famous book *On Abstinence* talks a great deal about the Brahmins and their philosophy, especially in the fourth book of the text. This leads us to infer that the disciple had obtained the authentic information regarding the ways and philosophical ideas of the Brahmins from his guru, who had visited the land of the Brahmins and assimilated their metaphysical and mystical thoughts in his own system. I sum up below Porphyry's description of the Brahmins and readers should judge for themselves how faithful it is to the Hindu way of life. The Greek writer is highly appreciative of the practical philosophy practised by the Brahmins, manifested in their adherence to a vegetarian diet as part of a philosophy involving non-violence and a belief in the transmigration of souls. He also speaks of the *ṛṣis* up in the Indian mountains, living on ripe fruits, milk and herbs, and of others by the Ganges, surviving on fruits and rice. He mentions that they are not only vegetarian but pursue a solitary life of silence. This description of the *ṛṣis* is the clearest proof that the source of Porphyry's information was very authentic and first-hand. It is true that he could have got some of the information, spelled out here, from his read-

ing of *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana* by Philostratus, but then, the use of the word *Ṛṣi* and the word 'Samanaeans' (i.e. Śramaṇa) leave us in no doubt whatsoever that the source of Porphyry was somebody other than Philostratus because the latter never uses these words.[66] I strongly feel that his source was Plotinus who had been to India and seen the way of life led by the Indians of the day with his own eyes and on returning home had apprised his pupil (i.e. Porphyry) of all this.

Alexandria and India: The Link

One significant result of Alexander's conquest of Egypt, Persia and of north-west India was that even after the conqueror's death, the commercial connection of India with the great centre of Greek culture in Egypt, located in Alexandria, which had been established by Alexander himself and which had been named after him, was maintained for a very long period. And with the commodities of trade there was a remarkable exchange of ideas. Alexandria was founded in 330 BC on the Nile Delta. It became an administrative, commercial and cultural centre under the Ptolemies and the Romans. It must be noted that Ptolemy Soter (*c.* 367–283 BC) had been a close friend and one of the generals who had accompanied Alexander during his Indian expedition. After Alexander's death he became governor of Egypt, and later declared himself king and founder of the Ptolemaic dynasty that ended with Cleopatra. He had also established himself as a great historian. He wrote what is regarded as the most reliable of the histories of Alexander. His reign lasted from 304 to 283 BC. He is also credited with having established the great library at Alexandria which is reported to have possessed 70,00,000 volumes of books. It was here that after Alexander died, Indians and Greeks met and exchanged ideas and did business. A large number of scholars of Alexandria, before and after the Christian era, dealt with Indian civilization and Indian philosophy, both heard and felt. Among the pre-Christian Alexandrian scholars most important were:

Cleitarchus, the Greek historian (fl. *c.* 280), Ptolemy Soter or just Ptolemy and Apollonius Rhodius (*c.* 295–*c.* 247 BC), who was a great scholar and a remarkable epic poet, his epic being *Argonautica*. Rhodius was for some time librarian at the museum in Alexandria. And among the post-Christian Alexandrian scholars, the most significant names were those of Ptolemy or Claudius Ptolemaeus (fl. AD 121–151), known for his *Geography* in 8 books; Clement of Alexandria (Titus Flavius Clemens) (*c.* AD 150–*c.* 214), author of *Exhortation to the Greeks* and *Stromata*; Dio Chrysostom (Dio Cocceianus) (*c.* AD 40–*c.* 115), noted for his orations; Dio Cassius (Cassius Dio Cocceianus) (*c.* AD 155-*c.* 235), author of *Roman History*; Saint Jerome (Sophronius Eusebius Hieronymus) (*c.* AD 348–420), author of the Vulgate Bible; Origen (*c.* AD 185–253), author of *Against Celsus* and Ammonius Saccas (*c.* AD 160–242), founder of the neo-Platonic school of philosophy and teacher of Plotinus, the greatest exponent of that philosophy; Porphyry (AD 232–302), the disciple of Plotinus and author of a 15-book treatise criticising Christianity called *Against the Christians*, and also of *On Abstinence*; and Bishop Hippolytus (*c.* 160–*c.* 235), theologian and the first of the antipopes, who had written *Philosophumena* or *The Refutations of All Heresies*. All these scholars deal with India in their works, mentioned here. Clement is the first Western scholar who talks about Buddha and Buddhism, and Bishop Hippolytus evinces deep knowledge about Brahmanic mysticism; I quote a passage from him, illustrating what I say:[67]

> Throughout life they go about naked, saying that the body has been given by the Deity as a covering for the soul. They hold that God is light, but not such light as we see with the eye, nor such as the sun or fire, but God is with them the Word,—by which term they do not mean articulate speech but the discourse of reason, whereby the hidden mysteries of knowledge are discerned by the wise. This light, however, which they call the Word, and think to be God, is, they say, known

> only by the Brahmans themselves, because they alone have discarded vanity, which is the outermost covering of the soul. The members of this sect regard death with contemptuous indifference....With regard to the Word, which they call God, they hold that it is corporeal, and that it wears the body as its external covering, just as one wears the woolen surcoat, and that when it divests itself of the body with which it is enwrapped it manifests to the eye....The Brahmans, therefore, when they have shuffled off the body, see the pure sunlight as fish see it when they spring up out of the water into the air.

Let the reader judge for himself the extent to which Hindu philosophy had come to be appreciated in the early centuries of the Christian era. The above passage clearly reveals the knowledge of Vedānt available with the Alexandrian scholars. Since Plotinus was of the same age and since his *Enneads* seems to be very close to *Vedāntasūtra*, I suspect that the bringer of this knowledge to the Mediterranean world was Plotinus who, I feel convinced, had been to India and met the Brahmins there.

I have not mentioned above another Alexandrian scholar who had led a Christian mission to India, his selection for the purpose having been made on the ground that since the Indians were a very austere kind of people, indifferent to pleasure and pain alike, he was the fittest for the job for of all the applicants, he had been found to be the most Stoic. This was Pantaenus, the first principal of the Christian College in Alexandria.[68]

Glimpses of India in Roman Writers

A great deal has been said about the reflection of India in Greek literature. Roman literature, not unlike Greek literature, mirrors the knowledge that Romans had acquired about India and the extent to which they were interested in Indian thought. I believe that the interest that the Latin authors evince in India was due to the friendly relation that had

been established between Rome and India in the aftermath of the decline of Greek power in the East and the consequent replacement of Greek power by Roman might. In the prosperous days of Augustan rule, that is, the rule of Gaius Julius Octavianus who lived from 63 BC to AD 14 and was the first Roman emperor (27 BC until his death) and who was the nephew of Julius Caesar and holder of the title 'Augustus', Indian luxuries poured forth into the Roman markets. *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (p. 452) rightly informs that Chinese silk reached the Roman market through India. Dio Cassius, in his 80-book *Roman History* (54.9) refers to the fact that Augustus had received an Indian delegation of envoys and that Zarmanochegas (Śramaṇāchārya, who was one of the envoys) had committed himself to the flames in 25 BC in Athens. This goes to prove that visits were exchanged between the Romans and the Indians and that would not be possible in the absence of mutual respect and appreciation. During the reign of Augustus, 120 ships sailed to India every year and under the reigns of his early successors the drain of Roman gold for Indian markets had caused anxiety. The principal imports from India to Rome were perfumes, spices (especially pepper), gems, ivory, pearls and China silk. And the Roman exports to India were linen, coral, glass, base metals, etc. Rome also sent much gold and silver coins (and later copper coins, too) of which large hoards have been found in south India. When the political relations between the two countries were so cordial, it was but natural that this cordiality got expressed in the contemporary Latin literature. The greatest satirist of the Augustan age, Juvenal, whose full name was Decimus Junius Juvenalius (*c.* 55–130 AD) refers to the Ganges in the very first line of his tenth satire:[69]

> Search every land, from Cardiz to the dawn-streaked shores
> Of Ganges, and you'll find few men who can distinguish
> A false from a worthwhile objective, or slash their way through
> The fogs of deception.

The epithet 'dawn-streaked' used for the 'Ganges' in the above quotation, suggests the world-famous wisdom of India, the land of the Ganges. He refers to the 'Hindu' along with the 'Moor' in his satire VI:[70]

Would that our ancient ritual
(At least in public aspect) was uncontaminated
By such malpractices! But every Moor and Hindu
Knows the identity of that 'lady'—harpist
Who brought a tool as long as both anti-Catonian
Pamphlets by Caesar into the sanctuary, where even
A buckmouse, ball-conscious, beats an embarrased retreat.

Is Juvenal making a reference to goddess 'Sarasvatị' in his expression 'lady-harpist'? I am not sure but it is not ruled out. What is important from our point of view is Juvenal's awareness of the Hindu and his ways. In satire VI itself the poet complains against the Indian luxuries that the Roman ladies were fond of:[71]

What's more insufferable
Than your well-heeled female? But earlier in the process
She presents a sight as funny as it's appalling,
Her features lost under a damp bread face-pack,
Or greasy with vanishing cream that clings to her husband's
Lips when the poor man kisses her—though it's all
Wiped off for her lover. She takes no trouble about
The way she looks at home: *those imported Indian*
Scents and lotions she buys with a lover in mind.
(mark the italicized portion!)

It seems that Juvenal had seen some Indians (in all probability from the south—Tamils or Malayālis). That is why he refers to the colours of the Indians in satire XI:[72]

But your modern millionaire
Cannot enjoy his dinner—the turbot and venison

Are equally tasteless, the scent and the roses stink
Like garbage in his nostrils—unless that broad table-top
Rests on an ivory leopard, rampant, snarling, a stand
Carved in the round from tusks such as Assuan exports,
And the slippery Moors, and the blacker-than-Moorish
Hindu. lines 118–24.

The above quotations, taken at random, from the works of Juvenal, clearly reveal the poet's acquaintance with Indian goods, Indian ways and even the colour of certain Indians whom he may have seen in his country, gone there on business. But Juvenal was the product of the post-Augustan era. Let us see what the contemporary poets of Augustas's reign knew of India. Horace (Quintus Horatius Flaccus, 65–8 BC), loyal supporter and friend of Augustas, refers to India and things associated with India, very often in his works. The word 'Indiae' occurs in Carminum ('Ode') 3.24.2 in the expression 'thesauris Arabum et divitus Indiae'; the relevant lines read in James Michie's English translation:[73]

You who are richer than
The unplundered treasure-chests of the Arabian
Sheikhs and the rajah kings,
Who build up all the land and thrust your scaffoldings
Into the public sea!

Horace seems to have been fully aware of the rivers of India. In 'Carminum Liber', 1.22.8, as well as in *Satire*, 2.8.14, he makes a reference to the Indian river 'Hydaspes' (Sanskrit 'Vipāshā', the modern 'Beas'). I quote the first reference, occurring in the expression 'fabulus lambit Hydaspes' very prominently; in Michie's English version the relevant lines read as follows:[74]

The good man innocent of sin,
Fuscus, may walk the world unharmed,
He has no need to travel armed
With bow or Moorish Javelin

Or clanking, poison-arrowed quiver
To cross the Syrtes' burning sands,
The hostile Caucasus or the lands
Washed by that legendary river,
Hydaspes.

Horace's longer poem entitled *Carmen Saeculare* line 56 too, has the word 'Indi', occupying a very prominent position in its texture.

The above references to India and things of India in the works of Horace are sufficient to prove that India was very much present in the imagination of the poet, though geographically speaking it was several thousand miles away from Rome.

What is true of Horace is equally true of Virgil (Publius Vergilius Maro) (70–19 BC), the Kālidāsa of Latin poetry, who seems to have had a very deep regard for India. His pastoral poem *Georgics*, written over a period of 7 years (37–30 BC) supply us numerous allusions to India and things Indian. *Georgics* II.122 for example, refers to the 'forest trees of India' whereas *Georgics* I.57 depicts India as a country producing the largest elephants. These 2 references to India in a significant work of the greatest of the Latin poets, who was, in all probability, a contemporary of Kālidāsa, if the latter belonged to the legendary King of Ujjain (Vikramāditya), are, I believe, sufficient to establish the cultural link that existed between India and Rome.

Rome and India after the Rise of the Parthian Power

Parthia was an ancient country of north-east Iran. It was successively part of the empire of Assyria, Persia, Macedon and Syria. Under the leadership of the Arsacid dynasty, it became independent and rose into a big empire, extending from Bactria and the Caspian Sea to the Euphrates and India, between 250 BC and AD 226. It was overthrown in AD 226 by the Sassanids of Persia. Since the Parthians were

hostile to Rome, the cultural relationship between Rome and India suffered a great deal during the Parthian rule in India. However, in the works of the Latin historians, geographers and philosophers, India remained an object of Roman reverence. From among the Roman philosophers of the period, the most significant name was that of Iamblichus (*c.* AD 250-*c.* 325) who had written books like *On the Life of Pythagoras* and *The Mysteries*. On the lines of Lucian, Plotinus, Apollonius, Apulius and Clement, Iamblichus glorifies the lives of the Brahmins of India, raising their philosophy sky-high. Another name that I would like to mention is that of Dionysios, the Periggetes, who flourished in the third century AD. He wrote a poem in which he paid a very rich tribute to India. The following lines of the poem in their English translation should convince anyone of the fact that India was held in the highest esteem during the classical times:[75]

To the East a lovely country wide extends,
India, whose borders the broad ocean bounds;
On this the sun, new rising from the main,
Smiles pleased, and sheds his early orient beam.
The inhabitants are swart, and in their locks
Betray the tints of the dark hyacinth.
Various their functions: some the rocks explore,
And from the mine extract the latent gold;
Some labour at the woof with cunning skill,
And manufacture lines; others shape
And polish ivory with the nicest care.
Many retire to rivers' shoal, and plunge
To seek the beryl flaming in its bed,
Or glittering diamond. Oft the jasper's found,
Green but disaphanous; the topaz too,
Of ray serene and pleasing; last of all,
The lovely amethyst, in which combine
All the wild shades of purple. The rich soil
Washed by a thousand rivers, from all sides
Pours on the natives wealth without control.

The poem is long and describes very vividly the flora and fauna and all the natural wealth of India quite faithfully.

After the fall of the Roman empire owing to the onslaught of the Visigoths in the fourth and fifth centuries of the Christian era, India continued to attract and influence the West through Persia and Arabia. It is, therefore, in the fitness of things that we turned to a discussion of the Indian influence on the West through these 2 countries which transmitted Indian wisdom to the West with which they had maintained their political and cultural contacts.

Indian Wisdom in the West Via Persia and Arabia

India and Iran or Persia have had cultural ties since time immemorial. Iranians are, in fact, descended from the same stock called Aryans who had produced the most ancient books of the world called the *Vedas*; their most ancient religious text *Zend-vesta* or just *Avesta*, written in a language closely allied to Sanskrit, the language of the *Vedas*, clearly proves this. As references to Darius, Scylax, Ktesias, etc., in the early paragraphs of this chapter make very clear, the Iranian courts were often decorated by Greek courtiers who were frequently commissioned by the Iranian kings to gather information on India. It was these Greek courtiers of the Iranian kings who proved to be the channels through which information regarding India used to reach Greece. Moreover, the Iranian kings used to employ Indian soldiers in their army and since Greece and Iran often engaged in wars, the Greeks were provided opportunities to see Indians for themselves. In Aeschylus's historical tragedy entitled *Persians* which deals with the war that the Iranian King, Xerxes I the Great, (*c.* 519–*c.* 465 BC; king of Persia, *c.* 485–*c.* 485) had fought against the Greeks in 480 BC, especially at Salamis, refers to the Indian soldiers fighting on the side of Iran.[76] Even Herodotus alludes to this fact.[77] During the rule of the Achaemenids, the Iranians had their sway over Punjab and that had definitely led to the strengthening of the cultural ties between the two great civilizations. When the Sassanids

came to rule over Persia after the fall of the Parthian empire, the relationship between Persia and India improved a lot because the Sassanids (*c.* AD 226–641) were great lovers of arts and sciences. Moreover, they were all enamoured of Indian wisdom in all fields of intellectual activity. The greatest of the Sassanids, namely, Chosroes Anushirvan (Khusro Naushirvan of the folklore), whose period is AD 531–579, was most ardently and genuinely interested in introducing Indian wisdom in his country. It seems that he had heard of the animal fables of India, full of wisdom and knowledge, contained in the volume called *Pancatantra.* With a view to obtaining a copy of this text, he is said to have spent a fortune in arranging a visit to India of his personal physician Berzuyet who succeeded in getting a copy of the text and translating it into Pahlavi under a title whose English rendering was *The Lights of Canopus.* A Syriac rendering of this Pahlavi version of the Sanskrit text was made in AD 570 under the title *Kalilag And Damnag*; this nomenclature of the book was after the 2 jackals, Karataka and Damanaka who play a very significant part in the fables. It was from the Syriac version of the Sanskrit text that its Arabic version was prepared under the title *Kalilah and Dimnah* by Abdallah-Bin-Mokaffah. Between the fifth and the thirteenth centuries of the Christian era, *Pancatantra* was further translated into Syriac from Arabic; from Syriac into Persian; from Persian into Old Spanish and then into Hebrew and in the fifteenth century the Hebrew *Pancatantra* was translated into German and various other languages of Europe. From the German translation of 1481 the Sanskrit text was rendered into Italian. It was this Italian version which was rendered into English by Sir Thomas North in which guise it became available to Shakespeare. Since the fables of *Pancatantra* have been narrated by a Brahmin philosopher to a king, the Europeans chose to call the collection *The Tales of Bidpai*, the term 'Bidpai' being a corrupt form of the Sanskrit word '*Vidyāpati*' which literally means 'owner of knowledge'. The term 'Bidpai' got further corrupted and became 'Pilpay' and at last its Indian author-

ship was lost. The French scholar and writer La Fontaine had made use of the fables of 'the Indian sage Pilpay'. In the course of its English translation at the seventh or eighth remove, the Sanskrit character of the fables underwent a complete transformation so much so that when it became part of the folklore it was hardly Indian. For example, in the well-known Welsh folk tale of Llewellyn and Gelert, the father comes home and is greeted by his hound which he had left to guard his infant daughter; its jaws are covered with blood, and thinking that it has killed his daughter, the father slays the hound only to repent later when he finds his daughter asleep in the cradle, safe and sound, with a dead wolf by her side. In the original Sanskrit tale in the *Pancatantra* a mangoose and a cobra play the part that the hound and the wolf play in the Welsh folk tale. Clearly, this sea change in the content of the tale is due to its very long travel and voyage over so many countries and so many centuries. Tens of thousands of such tales of the Sanskrit text have got transformed into European folk tales, losing their original character and retaining only the essence of the fable. The great historian of world-philosophies and world-civilizations—Will Durant—rightly observes: 'Indeed, India is probably responsible for most of the fables that have passed like an international currency across the frontiers of the world.'[78]

Not only Chosroe Anushirvan (Khusro Naushirvan) but also his predecessors and successors were enamoured of the medical and astronomical texts of India which they got translated into Pahlavi from which later on Arabic and Latin translations were made and these in their turns reached European countries subsequently. The personal physician of Anushirvan who had been commissioned by the king to go to India in search of the *Pancatantra*, returned to Persia not only with a copy of the Indian collection of animal fables but also with many herbs and medical texts. Anushirvan's successor—Mansur—is said to have had Chanakya's view on toxilogy as incorporated in the *Arthashastra*, translated into Pahlavi.

Apart from Persia, Arabia, too, proved to be a channel

through which Indian wisdom reached Europe during what is known as the Dark Ages, i.e. the period of European history following the fall of the Roman Empire. After prophet Mohammad (*c.* AD 570–632), his successors, the Caliphs, gradually emerged as a world-power. They invaded the Indian province of Sindha in the year 712 under the leadership of Abdul Kasim and defeated the Brahmin ruler of Sindha—Dāhira—and thus came into actual contact with India. Their sway was established over a very wide area of the world, from Sindha to the whole of the Middle East, and was later extended to Spain. They took Ctesiphon, the capital of Persia, in the year AD 641 and introduced Islam in the whole of Persia. The next year they captured Alexandria and destroyed the city's great library. However, they were no vandals but rather patrons of arts and letters. They opened schools and academies in Baghdad, Cairo and Cordova. Baghdad in Asia and Cordova in Europe became the centres of Arab culture and civilization. The first was founded in AD 762 and had a commanding position on the overland route between India and Europe. Likewise, Cordova, a chief town in Roman times, developed a splendid cultural centre as capital of the Umayyad Caliphate (756–1031) who had raised there the Great Mosque in the eighth century. During the Dark Age of Europe, says Professor Rawlinson,[79] it was the Arabs who kept the torch of learning alight. Since they were the masters of some parts of India and some parts of Europe, they naturally became a link between the East and the West. Indian wisdom was admired by the Arab rulers as much as it had been admired by the Persians in earlier centuries, especially during the reign of the Sassanids. The Abbasid Caliph of Baghdad—Harun-al-Rashid (786–809) who was born in AD 763, attracted a large number of scholars, philosophers, scientists and astronomers to his court from all parts of the world. Keeping close to the tradition of the rulers of the Sassnid dynasty like Ardshir and Shapur I, who had got several astronomical works of India translated into Pahlavi, Harun-al-Rashid had invited

the Indian astrologer Kaṇaka to his court and appointed him as his court-astrologer. It must be emphasized here that the same Caliph had exchanged gifts with the Holy Roman Emperor Charlemagne (*c.* 742–814, King of the Franks, 768–814, Emperor of the West, 800–814). In all probability, the gifts from the Caliph included Indian medicines and medical texts. Another Caliph, Mansur, had seen through the publication of a medical text *Sindhind* at his court in Baghdad; this is clearly an Arab rendering of *Brahmasphuta-Siddhānta* by Brahmagupta, the great astronomer and mathematician of India. Arabic works of the ninth century mention a number of Indian astrologers. The Indian impact on Arabic texts pertaining to astrology and medicine is writ large on their very titles. For example, *Arkand* and *Kardaja* are actually the Sanskrit words '*ahargaṇa*' and '*kramajyā*', respectively. Similarly, 'Sasrad' is the Indian physician 'Suṣruta' and 'Sirak' is 'Charaka', another physician of ancient India, author of the famous medical text *Caraka-Saṁhitā*. When we bear in mind the fact that during the Dark Ages and the Middle Ages, Arabic medicine and mathematics were very popular, the impact of Indian science on European science becomes self-evident because Arabic science itself clearly has the imprint of India. What the Europeans worngly call 'Arabic numerals' are actually 'Indian numerals'. *Longman Modern English Dictionary* (1976 edition) has this much to say on 'Arabic numerals': 'the figures 1, 2, 3, etc., in common use as opposed to the Roman numerals I, II, III, etc. The system was invented in India, passed through Persia to the Arabs, and was introduced in Europe in the tenth century' (p. 50). The Arabs themselves called these numerals 'Hindisa', denoting their Indian origin. The impact of Indian mathematics on European mathematics via Arabia can be proved very easily by considering the origin of the word 'zero', the numerical symbol '0', implying the absence of any value. The word is to be found in almost all European languages, bearing the same meaning. The word is derived from the Arabic word 'ṣifr' which itself is ultimately derived from the Sanskrit word *śūnya*.

Arabia gave another gift to Europe in the form of a game called 'chess'. Actually, the game is of Indian origin. Mandodarī, the wife of Rāvaṇa, King of Lankā, Lord Rama's enemy, is said to have invented this game. In the great Indian epic, *Rāmāyaṇa*, the game has been mentioned as 'Caturanga'. It was this Sanskrit word which is the source of the word 'Shataranj' which the Arabs and the Persians had adopted as the name by which they denoted the game that became popular in Europe as 'chess'. The origin of 'chess' is very interesting indeed. It is derived from the first member of the Persian word 'Shahmat' meaning 'the King is defeated'. The game-term 'Shahmat' was adopted by the Franks as 'chek mate'; the same form was adopted in Middle English also, which led to the modern English word 'checkmate' of which the first member check is ultimately the Persian 'Shah', the source of 'chess'.

The decimal system of calculation is another gift of India to the West and to the world at large via Arabia and Persia. It is actually the European form of 'Daśamalava-siddhānta' and had been fully and exhaustively expounded for the first time by the Indian mathematician Bhāskarāchārya, author of the great mathematical text *Siddhāntaśiromaṇi*, in the section called Līlāvatī of his *magnum opus* in the twelfth century AD.

Yet another way in which India has influenced the West through Arabia and Persia is through the collections of stories such as the *Arabian Nights* (Thousand and One Nights; Arabic title: *Alif Laila wa-laila*), *Tutinama*, and *Kitab el Sindbad*—all of which contain basically Indian tales by way of incorporation or direct translation. The first collection, that is, the *Arabian Nights* is believed to have been written between the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The source of this collection of tales was an ancient Persian book known as *Thousand Stories* (*Hazar Afsana*) which was translated into Arabic in the tenth century AD. But *Hazar Afsana* itself has lifted numerous tales of the Sanskrit collections *Pancatantra* which had been translated into Pahlavi in the age

of Khusro Naushirvan by his court-physician Berzuyet at the request of the king. Thus, *Arabian Nights* owes a lot to *Pancatantra*. But it has also made use of another collection of India—the birth stories of Bodhisattva (Buddha in his previous births), famous as the *Jātakas*. Many stories of *Jātakas* had reached Alexandria along with the moral tenets of Buddha. It must be placed on record that some of the Jātaka tales were known to Herodotus and Plato and that the so-called Aesop's tales are, in point of fact, Indian tales, most importantly the story of the washerman and his ass, who, under the garb of a tiger used to graze the crops of the villagers. Charles Lamb refers to this tale in his famous essay 'Christ Hospital: Five And Thirty Years Ago', calling it a tale from Aesop.[81] But basically this is a story from the *Pancatantra*. Now, Aesop is believed to have lived in the sixth century BC. On this very ground, Western scholars rule out the possibility of Aesop having been in possession of Indian tales in that remote antiquity. But these scholars need to be reminded of the fact that a contemporary and compatriot of Aesop, i.e. Pythagoras, had come to India and had been instructed by the Indian sages. Both Aesop and Pythagoras belonged to the Greek island of Samos. It is, in all probability, Pythagoras, who had familiarized the slave Aesop with the Indian tales. So far as the age of the composition of the *Panctantra* is concerned, it is unknown but there is no doubt about the remote antiquity of its tales; they may be much older than the first Orientalist of the world, namely, Pythagoras. So far as the *Tutinama* is concerned, it is clearly a Persian translation of the Sanskrit collection of bird tales entitled *Śukasaptatiḥ*. About the Arabian collection of tales entitled *Kitab el Sindbad*, the Arabian scholar Masudi himself has confessed its Indian origin; the work is derived from the *Arabian Nights* which owes many of its tales, as we have said earlier, to the *Pancantantra* and the *Jātakas*. Though the *Arabian Nights* was introduced to the West in its complete form in the seventeenth century when the French Orientalist, Antoine Galland (1646–1715), published its French rendering,

many of its tales had already travelled to European countries by way of mouth. The crusaders and merchants are the possible carriers. The Italian writer, Giovanni Boccaccio (1313–1375 AD), author of the prose tales called *Decameron*, used many of these tales in his storybook. The English contemporary of Boccaccio—Geoffrey Chaucer got a lot of material from the *Arabian Nights* via Boccaccio. Thus, both Boccaccio and Chaucer are indebted to the compiler of the *Arabian Nights* and ultimately to India.

When we talk about the impact of India on Western civilization via Arabia and Persia, we need to refer to some Arab scholars who were influenced by Indian science in general and Indian medicine in particular, and were known to European intellectuals of their own day and of subsequent ages. In this connection we will refer to 2 Arab scholars—Avicenna (Arab-ibn Sina, AD 980–1037) and Averroes (Arab-ibn Rushd, AD 1126–1198) who enjoyed a very high reputation with European poets and scholars such as Dante, Petrarch and Chaucer. We would like to mention 2 more Arab scholars who were aware of the intellectual traditions of the East as well as the West and transmitted Indian wisdom to the West through Avicenna and Averroes. These scholars were Al-Biruni (i.e. Abul-Rayhan Muhammad, al-Biruni, AD 973–1051) and al-Kindi (Arab-Abu Yusuf, fl. ninth century). Of these two, al-Biruni is of paramount importance because it was he who had mastered the Sanskrit language and literature as revealed in his translation of the passages of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* in his *Al-Hind* or *Ta'rikh al-Hind* (completed in 1030). He was well-versed in the religious-mystical tradition of India and had acquired first-hand knowledge about the scientific and medical ideas of the country where he had stayed for a considerable period of time when he accompanied his patron—Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni in the latter's Indian compaigns. But he was also a master of the intellectual tradition of the West. Avicenna was his contemporary and both were in contact with each other. Averroes, on the other hand, being his late successor, knew his works full-well.

Naturally, al-Biruni was able to transmit Indian wisdom to the West via Avicenna and Averroes—both of whom, as we have said earlier, were known to the medieval intellectuals of the West. Averroes was very popular in the Christian world. He was translated into Latin in the thirteenth century by Michael Scott. It should also be affirmed that a school of free thinking people in Europe came into being among the Franciscan friars and among the scholars at the University of Paris, known as Averroists. Apart from the above mentioned Arab scholars, one more name will not be out of place—that of Mohammad ibn Musa al-Khwarazmi, who flourished in the ninth century AD and in the year 830 had made a translation of several mathematical and astronomical works of India from the Sanskrit original into Persian. He had published a book on algebra in Persian which was translated into Latin in the twelfth century under the title *Algoritmi de numero Indrum*. It was this book which had enlightened the West on the decimal system and the so-called 'Arabic numerals' which should properly be called 'Indian numerals'. Similarly, Omar Khayyam (Ghiath uddin Abdul Fath Omar ibn Ibrahim al-Khayyam, *c.* 1050–1123), one of the greatest mathematicians of the Middle Ages who was highly influenced by Indian mathematics and astronomy, transmitted Indian wisdom to Europe where he was held in high esteem for his mathematical virtuosity.

Transmission of the Vedāntic Thought to the West Through Sufi Mystics

Sufism was a system of mainly heterodox, mystical groups within Islam, which developed in Persia and Iraq in the eighth century AD. It was evolved by the adherents of the Shia sect of the Muslims on the basis of the *Batn* or esoteric messages of the *Holy Koran*. Its system of thought was highly influenced by the Vedāntic philosophy of the *Upanishads*. On the pattern of the Indian sages, Sufi mystics advocated asceticism and meditation as means of achieving rapturous union with the Universal Spirit. Perhaps, the Sufis had derived the mys-

tical philosophy of the Upanishads from the neo-Platonists of Alexandria. The great Sufi mystics were known to the Christian mystics of the Middle Ages—Sufis such as Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Ghazali (1059–1111 AD), Muhammad ibn Ali Ibn al-'Arabi, called Muhyi al-Din (AD 1165–1240), and Jalal al-Din, known as Rumi (i.e. of Rum, Asia Minor) and Mawlana ('our master') (AD 1207–1273). These Persian mystics were very well known to the medieval mystics of Europe such as Thomas Aquinas (*c.* AD 1225–1274) and Johann Eckhart (*c.* AD 1260–1327). Ibn al-'Arabi, it must be put on record, was born at Murcia in Spain and had spent his youth in Seville. Thus, he was in the mainstream of the European fraternity of thinkers and mystics. Moreover, Averroes and Avicenna, who were known to the European intellectuals, had imbibed many tenets of Sufism and through them Sufi thoughts had been transmitted to the West.

Indian Thoughts in the West Via Manichae and Gnostic Thinkers

We have not described above the role that the 2 religious movements called Gnosticism and Manichaeism played in spreading Indian thought in Europe. The fact of the matter is that these movements were quite influential not only in Asia but also in the West and both of them were inspired by Indian religious thoughts. The movement called Gnosticism is older of the two. It arose during the Hellenistic period in the Near East; it was a deliberate effort to fuse Christian, Platonic and Indian ideas at a time when syncretism was most acceptable to the common people. Gnosticism has been aptly described as 'orientalism in Hellenic mask'. Since the adherents to this movement attached utmost importance to 'divine revelation' (gnosis), the movement came to be known as Gnosticism. There were numerous sects belonging to the cult of gnosis. The main leaders of the movements were: Simon Magus, Basilides, Valentinus and Marcion. Of these the most influential was Basilides, a contemporary of the Roman Emperor Hadrian (Publlius Aelius Hadrianus, 76–138,

emperor between 117–138). He was a Hellenized Egyptian. He had borrowed a lot of ideas of Buddhism which he very ingeniously employed in expounding his own philosophy. The other leaders of the movement were also influenced by India in some way or the other. The Gnostics were able to impress many of the early church fathers, most importantly Origen (*c.* AD 185–*c.* 254) who evinces Gnostic tendencies in his thought pattern, especially in his view regarding Metempsychosis or the theory of re-birth which was propounded for the first time in India, and which was an anathema to the Apostolic Christianity.

Allied to Gnosticism was Manichaeism which had been founded by Mani (*c.* AD 216–*c.* 276), a Babylonian whose seat of proselytizing was in Parsia. Mani is said to have journeyed to India and China. Manichaeism spread widely in Asia and around the Mediterranean world. It influenced the early Christian heresies. St. Augustine was at first a follower of Manichaean beliefs before he took to the Christian faith. It must be noted that St. Augustine (d. AD 604) has the credit of having introduced Christianity in Great Britain in the year AD 597. Since Mani had travelled to India in his quest of wisdom, the impact of India on his system cannot be gainsaid and since he had influenced St. Augustine and the Cathari[82] (who had a theory of tranmigration very similar to that of Buddhism) the influence of Manichaean philosophy and through that philosophy the influence of India on the West becomes self-evident, when we bear in mind the fact that the Cathari had overrun southern and western Europe from Constantinople to the Pyrenees and from the Mediterranean to the North Sea.

Jewish Philosophers as the Carriers of Indian Thought to the Western World

The relation between the Jews and the Indians is very old. The tiny Jewish community of Cochin, for example, claims to have come and settled in India in the first century of the Christian era. This proves that the Jews regarded India as

a sacred place where they could safely and fearlessly live by their faith unimpeded and unhindered by anyone. Moreover, in the age of Clement and Origen, there were Jewish communities living in Alexandria along with Buddhist and Hindu communities.[83] Naturally, the Jews learnt about Indian religious and ethical beliefs from the Indians living in Alexandria. During the Middle Ages, the Jews produced many learned men knowing Hebrew, Greek and Latin. They had also acquired the knowledge of Indian medicine and chemistry from the Arabs in Moorish Spain. The impact of India is evident on the alchemy that the Jews taught and practised throughout Europe during the Middle Ages; the source of the alchemy was Buddhist chemistry which was the producer of *Pārada* (mercury), *svarṇabhaṣma* (gold-ash) and various mixtures (*rasāyanas*)—all intended to bring back lost youth. Indian philosophical ideas, too, were transmitted to the West through the Jews. The Jewish philosopher Barush Spinoza (1632–77), for example, learnt the Hindu pantheism from Maimonides (Rabbi Moses ben Maimon, 1135–1204) the Jewish physician, theologian and philosopher, who was born in Cordova, the seat of Arab science and philosophy. He originally wrote in Arabic but was immediately translated into Hebrew, and a few decades after his death into Latin. Another Jewish philosopher of the Middle Ages was the Swiss Paracelsus (Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim, 1493–1541) who along with Giordano Bruno (1548–1600), had been influenced by the philosophy of al-Ghazali and of al-Batagni who in their turns had imbibed the spirit of Hindu philosophy. Paracelsus was a Swiss and Bruno was Italian by birth. We should not forget to mention the contribution of the Spanish Jew—Ibn Gebirol, known to medieval scholastics as Avicebron (*c.* 1021–1058), who, too, had acquired some knowledge of Hindu philosophy along with the neo-Platonist mystical thought and had transmitted both to the West. And who can ignore Philo Judaeus (30 BC–AD 45), the Greek-Jewish thinker who had glorified Indian philosophy in his works very highly?

Transmission of Indian Thought to the West Via Travellers

Some world-travellers of great repute, too, should be credited with having spread knowledge about India and Indian philosophy in the Western world. Even if we leave the Greek travellers like Cosmas Indicopleustes, the work of Marco Polo (1254–1324), the Venetian, ibn Batuta (*c.* 1304–*c.* 1378), the Arab traveller from Morocco; Nicolo de Conti, another Venetian of the fifteenth century; Jordanus, a French Dominican monk of Severac in south-west France who had come to India in the fourteenth century, Robert de Nobili, the Italian who had come to India in the heydays of the Vijayanagar empire; and of John of Monte Corvino, a Franciscan friar, who had come to India in the closing years of the thirteenth century, can never be ignored because their narrations about Indian beliefs and customs, and even religious thought, kept the West fairly well-informed about India throughout the Middle Ages.

As the discussion in the foregoing paragraphs makes sufficiently clear, India was always present in the imagination of the West; there was presumably no period in the history of human civilization when India was absent from the minds of the West. Indian thought kept reaching the Western countries from the very beginning of Western civilization proper, sometimes directly and sometimes through other countries. The above discussion has successfully demonstrated through literary evidences that right from Homer onwards, European literature provides ample references to India which establish beyond doubt the estimation in which India had been held in the Western world down the ages. And so far as the Western view of Indian philosophy in ancient times is concerned, it had been very very cordial, favourable and admiring; the ancient Greeks regarded India as the original home of philosophy. Pythagoras's almost universally acknowledged visit to India speaks volumes about the prestige that Indian philosophy enjoyed in the sixth century before the Christian era. Even when India lost most of its pristine glory with the rise of

the Arab power in the Middle East and in the wake of Muslim invasions, Indian philosophy retained a lot of its charms. One very clear proof of this is provided by a letter that an old disciple of Spinoza wrote to him, asking the great philosopher whether he was more original than Indian philosophers. The disciple had been provoked by the philosopher's high claim that his philosophy was more original than that of any philosopher—past and present.[84] Clearly, Indian philosophy was regarded very highly even in the age of Baruch Spinoza (1632–77) when India had fallen on evil days and when the modern Europe was yet to come face to face with the original works of Indian literature, religion and philosophy. In the next chapter, effort will be made to narrate the story of how Great Britain gradually felt attracted to India and why its scholars thought it proper to translate the Indian text like the *Bhagavad-Gītā* from the original into their own tongue.

Notes and References

1. *Bacchae*, translated by Philip Vellacott, Penguin Books, published 1954, 1972 edition, p. 192.
2. *Astādhyāyī* 4.1.49. The *sutra* runs thus:
   इन्द्रवरुणभवशर्वरुद्रमृडहिमारण्य-यवयवनमातुलाचार्याणामानुक्.
   Indra-Varunabhavaśarva rudramṛda himaraṇya Yavayavanamātulāchāryāṇāmānuk. See also
   यवनानां लिपिर्यवनानी वा व्यवनाल्लिप्याम्
   yavananām lipiryavanāni vā. yavanāllipyāṃ (2474)
3. Ibid. 3.21.62, 4.2.56, 6.2.38 and 8.3.95. In these *sutras* Pānini uses expressions such as "भारतः संग्रामः" and "सौभद्रः संग्रामः" and explains words like युधिष्ठिर, भीम, विदुर and महाभारत
4. Vide Adi Parva 85.34, Anuśāsana Parva 35.18, Droṇa Parva 68.41 Sabhā Parva 31.73, Vana Parva 188.35 and 254.8.
5. *Herodotus* 3.125.
6. *Politics* 32b24 (Book VII, xiii 1–3).
7. Cited by George Woodcock, *The Greeks in India*, Faber and Faber Ltd., London, 1966, p. 19.
8. Samuel Johnson, *Oriental Religions and Their Relation to Universal Religion*, 2 volumes, Vol. I, Trubner & Co., Lonton, 1879.

9. For the first see George Woodcock, op. cit., p. 153 and for the latter see *Philostratus: The Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, translated in 2 volumes by F.C. Conybeare, Vol. I, William Heinemann, London, 1912, p. 263 (Book III, chapter XVI), where Apollonius asserts to the Indian sage Iarchus: 'How can you ask, when it is sufficiently shown by the fact that I have taken a journey to see you which was never till now accomplished by any of the inhabitants of my country.' See more specifically p. 269 where at the very outset of Chapter XIX of Book III, Iarchus tells Apollonius: 'That which Pythagoras imparted to you, and which we imparted to the Egyptians.' See also John Drew, *India and the Romantic Imagination*, Oxford Univerity Press, New Delhi, 1987, p. 95.
10. The word 'Śulba' means 'a rope or string'. In the books called Gṛhyasutras, the chapters dealing with the sacrificial altars have been called 'Śulbasūtras'. The substance of what is known as Pythagorean theorem can be found in *Baudhayanagṛhyasutra* as well as *Katyayanagṛhyasutra*. Katyayana Śulba 2.11 reads as follows:

   दीर्घचतुरस्रस्याक्ष्या रज्जुः तिर्यङ्मानी पार्श्वमानी च यत् पृथग्भूते।
   कुरुतस्तदुभयं करोतीति क्षेत्रज्ञानम्।

   More or less the same words occur in Baudhāyana Sulba 1.48. The aphorism cited above purports to state that the square of the diagonal in a quadrilateral is equal to the squares on the length and the breadth of either of the 2 parts of the quadrilateral.
11. Dr B. Dutta, *The Science of the Śulba*, Calcutta University, Calcutta, 1932.
12. See the polemical chapters of the author's work entitled *Stromata*. Also see John Drew, op. cit., p. 112.
13. *The Florida of Apuleius* XV in *The Works of Apuleius*, Bohn edition, 1853, pp. 265–6. See also John Drew, op. cit., p. 118.
14. A.L. Basham, *The Wonder that was India*, London, 1954, p. 41 where the author treats Janaka as a pre-Buddhist historical figure.
15. Stanley Wolpert, *A New History of India*, Oxford University Press, New York, first published 1977, second edition, 1982, p. 24.
16. Vide I Kings 9.28 in the Old Testament of the Holy Bible which reads as follows:

> And Hiram sent in the navy his servants, shipmen that had knowledge of the sea, with the servants of Solomon. And they came to Ophir and fetched from thence gold, four hundred and twenty talents, and brought it to King Solomon.

Also vide I Kings 10.11 which reads:

> And the navy also of Hiram, that brought gold from Ophir, brought in from Ophir great plenty of almug trees, and precious stones.

The place-name 'Ophir' in both the passages cited here, in all probability, refers to Supārā, a port town of ancient India, near the modern Bombay (now called Mumbai). This becomes clear from Genesis 10.30 where the expression 'Sephar a mount of the east' has been used. This Sephar can be and has been identified with Supārā (a corrupt form of Supāraka). Among those who regard the Biblical references Ophir as a historic fact and identify it with Supārā in India is Stanley Wolpert. See his work *A New History of India* op. cit., pp. 19-20. The expression 'ivory, apes and peacocks of Ophir' occurs on p. 56 of Wolpert's book during his discussion of Biblical references to India.

17. E. Pocock, *India in Greece*, John J. Griffin and Co., London, 1952.
18. See on this point George Woodcock, *The Greeks in India*, op. cit., p. 19.
19. Vide the comments on this passage put forward by the best known editor of *Antigone*—R.C. Jebb.
20. The quotation is from the edition of Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa* published by Gita Press, Gorakhpur, in 2 volumes, Vol. II, p. 374.
21. Stanley Wolpert, *A New History of India*, op. cit., p. 55.
22. *Herodotus.* III.
23. *Mahābhārata*, Sabhāparva.
24. *Herodotus.* III.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
28. See *Ancient India as Described by Ktesias the Knidian* translated and edited by J.W. McCrindle, London, 1882, p. 75.

29. On this point see John Drew, *India and the Romantic Imagination*, op. cit., p. 172.
30. For Jone's view that Plato had derived his sublime theories from the Vedant philosophy of India, see his third anniversary discourse on the Hindus, delivered on 2 February 1786.
31. George Woodcock, op. cit., p. 150.
32. H.W. Rawlinson, *The Legacy of India*, edited by G.T. Garratt, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1973, p. 13.
33. Plato's *Republic*, translated by Paul Shorey (London, 1924), p. 104.
34. Robert Ernest Hume, *The Thirteen Principal Upanishads translated from the Sanskrit with an outline of the Philosophy of the Upnishads*, Oxford University Press, first published 1921, IInd revised edition, 1931, p. 407. All quotations from the Upanishads for the present discussion are from this edition of Hume. Hence onward the book will be referred to as 'Hume'.
35. Plato's *Meno*.
36. Hume, op. cit., p. 34.
37. Plato's Epistle VII.
38. Hume, p. 375.
39. See *Plato with an English translation, containing Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Phaedo and Phaedrus* by Harold North Fowler with an introduction by W.R.M. Lamb, William Heinemann, London, first printed 1914, reprinted 1926, p. 471 sqq.
40. Hume, pp. 351-52.
41. Arthur Berriedale Keith, 'The Religion and Philosophy of the Ved and Upanishads', Harvard Oriental Series, XXXII, Cambridge, Mass, 1925, pp. 609–10. The author pleads strongly for Plato's independance on p. 613.
42. Vide *Plato* by Harold North Fowler, op. cit., note 39 on pp. 287-88 for another version of the same text. The purport is the same.
43. Hume, op. cit., p. 420.
44. See Schleiermacher, *Platons Werke*, I, i^2, Berlin, 1812, p. 385 where the verses cited by Plato have been called 'secret poems of Homerides'. Some scholars think that the poems mentioned by Plato are Orphic. In my view the Greek philosopher is referring to the Upanishads.
45. George Woodcock, op. cit., p. 154.

46. See Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* with an English translation by R.D. Hicks in 2 volumes, Vol. I, William Heinemann, London, p. 98.
47. Werner Jaeger, *Aristotle*, translated by R. Robinson, Oxford University Press, London, 1945, p. 169.
48. Elder Pliny, *Naturalis Historia* XXX.3.
49. Stutfield, *Mysticism and Catholicism*, London, 1925, p. 74.
50. William Ralph Inge, *Christian Mysticism Considered in Eight Lectures, Delivered Before the University of Oxford*, Methuen & Co. Ltd., London, first published, 1899, seventh edition 1933, p. 162.
51. Ibid., p. 78.
52. The Greek word 'Gymnosophist' literally means 'naked wise-men'. It can be applied to the wholly naked Digambar *sanyasins* of Jainism as well as to the Nāgā *sanyasins*, belonging to the Shaiva sect of Hinduism.
53. *Works of William Jones*, edited by Lord Teignmouth, 13 volumes, Vol. III, pp. 237-38. See how Jones speculates here whether Aristotle by way of Callisthenes, had been influenced by the Nyāya school of Indian philosophy.
54. Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy*, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, first published 1946; sixth impression 1971, p. 206.
55. Vide D.R. Dudley's entry on 'Atomists' in *Penguin Companion to Literature 4: Classical and Byzantine Plus Oriental and African*, 1969, Penguin, pp. 37-38.
56. *Diogenes Laertius: Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 479. According to Diogenes Laertius, Aristotle called the fifth element 'Aetheria' and pinpointed its motion as circular.
57. Monier Williams, *Indian Wisdom*, Wm.H. Allen & Co., London, 1875, p. 77 for the first and p. 81 for the second.
58. Herbert H. Gowen, *A History of Indian Literature*, New Delhi, 1967, p. 262.
59. Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy*, op. cit., p. 243.
60. George Woodcock, *The Greeks in India*, op. cit., p. 151.
61. H.J. Rose, *A Handbook of Greek Literature From Home to the Age of Lucius*, Methuen & Co. Ltd., London. See the chapter 'Hellenistic Poetry', pp. 346-47.

62. F.C. Conybeare has translated and edited *Philostratus: The Life of Apollonius of Tyana* in 2 volumes; William Heinemann, London, 1912. The book is really very interesting and rewarding.
63. Ibid., p. 335.
64. On this point, namely, the account of Apollonius's Indian experiences is true to facts—facts as they stood in India at the beginning of the Christian era, see John Drew, *India and the Romantic Imagination*, op. cit., pp. 93-94.
65. J.F. Staal, *Advait and Neoplatonism*, Madras, 1961, p. 231.
66. Porphyry, *On Abstinence*, Book IV.i.17-18. The words 'rishis' and 'Samananeans' (Shramanas or Sanyasins) have been used by Porphyry. But Plotinus never uses these words.
67. *The Refutation of All Heresies*, translated by J.H. MacMohan, Edinburgh, 1868, Book I.XXi.59-60. See also Staal, op. cit., pp. 243-45.
68. Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, V.10.
69. *Juvenal: The Sixteen Satires* translated by Peter Green, Penguin Book first published 1967, 1972 edition, op. cit. p. 205.
70. Ibid., p. 139.
71. Ibid., pp. 144-45.
72. Ibid., p. 231.
73. *The Odes of Horace*, translated with an Introduction by James Michie, Penguin Books, first published 1964, 1973 edition, p. 189.
74. Ibid., p. 59.
75. Cited by Sir William Jones in his third discourse, addressed to the Asiatic Society of Bengal on the 2 February 1786. Vide *The Works of William Jones with the Life of the Author*, Vol. III, op. cit., pp. 31-32.
76. See the opening Chorus of *The Persians* lines 55-58. Seth G. Benardete has translated the relevant lines in the following words:

> And the tribes from all Asia
> Who carry the sword
> Follow beneath the
> Awesome parade of their king.

I believe the expression 'all Asia' used in the above extract includes India. See *The Complete Greek Tragedies* edited by

David Grene and Richmond Lattimore, Vol. I, The University of Chicago Press, 1959. *The Persians* tanslated by Seth G. Benardete was first published by the University of Chicago Press in 1956.

77. *Herodotus* VII.
78. Will Durant, *The Story of Civilization, Vol. I: Our Oriental Heritage.*
79. H.G. Rawlinson, *India: A Short Cultural History*, revised edition, London, 1952, p. 48.
80. Valmiki's *Ramayana* I.5.16 where the word '*Astapada*' has been used in the sense of a game resembling Chess. On this point see Shantikumar Nannooram Vyas, *India in the Ramayana Age*, Atma Ram & Sons, Delhi, 1967, p. 227.
81. *The Essays of Elia* (1823), the essay entitled 'Christ Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago'.
82. On 'Cathari' see Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy* op. cit., pp. 438-39. Please note that the 'Cathari' were also called 'Albigenes'.
83. See John Drew, *India and the Romantic Imagination*, op. cit., pp. 145-46. It is very interesting to note that Dion Chrysostom noticed Indians among his audience in Alexandria.
84. See the letter written to Spinoza by his former pupil Albert Burgh (Epistle No. 73) in which the following statement is very remarkable:

> You assume that you have at last found the true philosophy. How do you know that your philosophy is the best of all those which have ever been taught in the world, are now taught; or shall be taught hereafter? Have you examined all those philosophies, both ancient and modern, which are taught here, in India, and all the world over?

Will Durant has quoted this extract from Spinoza's Epistle No. 73 in his eminent book *The Story of Philosophy*, The Pocket Library, New York, 1954, p. 159. Durant also quotes Spinoza's reply to Mr. Albert Burgh's letter, addressed to him. In his reply Spinoza gives a prominent place to Indian religions.

English Explorations of Indian Traditions: A Short History

Although England came into direct contact with India at the close of the sixteenth century in the wake of the discovery of a new sea route to India (wrongly projected in history books as the discovery of India) in the year 1498 by the Portuguese navigator Vasco da Gama, India had fascinated the English mind at least since the age of Alcuin or albinus (English name—Ealhwine), theologian, man of letters and coadjutor of Charlemagne, King of the Franks and Emperor of the West. Alcuin, who lived from AD 735 to 804, is, in all probability, the first Englishman to have referred to India.[1] Later in the ninth century, Alfred (849–901), King of the West Saxons (871–901), is said to have sent presents to Indian kings if we are to trust William of Malmesbury (d. 1143), the English historian, author of *Gesta Regum Anglorum* and *Historia Novella*.[2] And if pepper, cinnamon and frankincense are essentially and exclusively Indian commodities, then even the Venerable Bede (673–735), historian and scholar of seventh century England, author of *De Natura Rerum*, knew India for he is said to have been in possession of these commodities, and knew the country of their origin.[3] However, it was Marco Polo (1254–1324), a member of a patrician family of Venice, who acquainted the West, including England, with vivid details about India, China and other Eastern nations. He had accompanied his father and uncle in 1271 on an embassy from the Pope to Kublai, Grand Khan of Tartary, and had spent 17 years serving the Khan who had employed him on services of importance. Marco Polo's accounts of the eastern nations

were very popular throughout Europe and French-knowing Englishmen could read them in their original French version, for they seem to have been originally written in French. True, they were translated into English for the first time in 1579 by John Frampton, but the first serious English translation was by W. Marsden in the early nineteenth century. However, it was the French version of Marco Polo's tales which the Englishmen of the Middle Ages knew and enjoyed. Like Marco Polo's tales, the voyage to the East including India made by Friar Odoric of Pordenone in the early fourteenth century was very popular. Both of them seem to have supplied Chaucer and his contemporaries a fair amount of knowledge about India. Both Chaucer and Gower refer to India in their respective poetic masterpieces *Canterbury Tales* and *Confessio Amantis*, calling her 'Inde'. 'The great Emetrius, the king of Inde' occurs at line 2156 in the Knight's Tale by Chaucer and Lib.V of Gower's work alludes to India in these words: 'And Thomas eke with his beyete of Inde.' Chaucer, moreover, owes many of his tales to India—those of the Merchant, Squire, Franklin, Pardoner and the Shipman. Scholars have traced the sources of these tales to the Jātaka tales and the stories of the *Pancatantra*.[4] Indian tales had reached Chaucer through Arab writers, to some of whom Chaucer makes specific references. In his characterization of the 'Doctor of Phisik' in the General Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales*, for example, he refers to the Arab physicians Razis, Avicenna and Averroes, all of whom were deeply indebted to the Indian medical science called 'Ayurveda'. As I have explained in the previous chapter, the Indian tales of *Pancatantra* and *Jātakas* had been translated first in Pahlavi, then in Arabic, and then the Arabic version was translated into Latin and lastly from Latin it was translated into the regional languages of Europe such as German, French, Portuguese, Spanish, Italian and the Scandinavian languages. Centuries before the translation into Pahlavi, the *Pancatantra* tales had reached the Greek shores through traders and voyagers for they can be found in Aesop's tales, but their Latin versions can be

seen in *Decameron* and other collections of the Middle Ages. Chaucer's indebtedness to them is quite probable and understandable.

After Chaucer and Gower, Sir John Mandeville is the most significant English writer to have dealt with India. He is the presumed author of *The Voiage and Travaile of Sir John Mandeville* (*c.* 1357–1371) which purports to be an account of his own travels between 1322 and 1357 across 3 parts of the world—Europe, Africa and the East, including India and China. Modern scholars believe that the English book is a translation of a French compilation of the travels of William of Boldensele, Friar Odoric of Pordenone and of Vincent de Beauvais, prepared, in all probability, by a certain Jean d'Dutremeuse, a writer of histories and fables. According to him, Sir John Mandeville of England had assumed the name of Jehan de Bourgogne, or Jean a la Barbe and we might safely conclude that he had passed the French original off as his own creation. However it may be, the work under question deals with India in detail. It throws ample light on the geographical, religious and cultural features of the country. The following extract from it is quite revealing:[5]

> And in the most high place of Paradise, even in the middle place, is a well that casteth out the four floods that run by diverse lands; out of which the first is cleped Pison or Ganges, that is all one, and it runneth throughout Ind or Havilah, in the which river be many precious stones and much lignum aloes and much gravel of gold...
>
> The first river is cleped Pison, that is to say in their language 'assembly' for many rivers meet them there and go into that river. And same men clepe it Ganges, for a king that was in Ind that hight Gangeres and that it ran throughout his land. And that water is in some place clear and in some place troubled, in some place hot and in some place cold.

In the above extract we find India and other eastern nations like Egypt and Arabia treated as earthly paradise but

then certain facts about India are factually correct. The word 'Pison' which has been used as a synonym of the Ganges is, in all probability, a corrupt form of the Sanskrit word 'Payasvinī' which literally means what the passage takes the word 'Pison' to mean—the assembly of rivers; no doubt the Ganges is so called from Devaprayāga onward where the Alakanandā, Mandākini and Bhāgīrathī form the Ganges through their confluence, and before this confluence many other rivers commingle with the Bhāgīrathī and Alakanandā. Thus, I think the information supplied by Mandeville about the Ganges is quite accurate. So far as the allusion to the king of Ind called Gangares is concerned, he is referring to King Śantanu, husband of the Ganges and father of Bhīṣma, otherwise known as Gangā-putra or son of the Ganges. Clearly, Mandville had some access to the mythology of India and the person who had reported to him about India had paid a real visit to the original land of the Āryans. And in case he had personally visited India, he must be credited with having made very sincere efforts at understanding her cultural traditions. That he or his informer had a real knowledge about India is clear from his observation regarding the river Sindhu or Indus which was for long the Western boundary of India. Talking about the country as a whole, Mandeville says: 'it is cleped Ynde for a Flome that renneth thorghe out the Contree, that is cleped Ynde. In that Flome were fynden Eles of 30 Fote long and moe'.

After Mandeville's account of India we come across the metrical romance, the *Gestes of Alexander*, perhaps written in some north-eastern part of England by some unknown author in about 1430. This text gives a very vivid description of the elephants and other marvellous animals in the Indian army and exults in the wealth of jewels in which the country abounded. It also provides an account of Alexander's meeting with the Gymnosophists of India led by Dindimus.[6] The work appears to be based on the information provided by the classical writers about India and her rich resources.

Nearly a 100 years later we come across a more famous

poem on the same subject in a southern dialect, providing more details about India. Part II, Chapter I, shows India as a rich and highly populated country, possessed of beautiful cities and castles, surrounded by Farangos, Maritiny and Houndynges. After the invasion of the country of Porus by Alexander and the former's defeat, the two enemies become friends and

Now went Porus so I finde
With King Alisaunder overe all Ynde
To shew him the merveilynges
Of men, of bestes, of other thinges,
Ande helpen wynne under his honde
All the nacions of the londe.

They go to the extremity of the country and ask the people there if they could go further. A churl answers their query and the writer of the poem provides the first impression perhaps of the typical Indian given to the medieval Englishmen which persists even to our own day:

To his navel penge his berd,
He was also blak as pycche
And had a face well griseliche.

The churl described here appears to be a Tamil having his face besmeared with the paste of turmeric powder and thus looking grisly. A visit to Tamil Nadu even today could vindicate the picture of the Indian from the south. The churl told Porus and Alexander that there was no land southwards; there was the Red Sea westwards, and northwards there were desert and wilderness beset with tigers, bears, lions, dragons and poisonous snakes. Only to the east was there a country known as Eastern Ind, populated by a largely built black tribe. Here, in the Eastern Ind, Alexander tarries and meets with a large number of marvels. The poet of the romance provides a picture of Benares and of the Ganges abounding in eels of 30 feet. All this is quite surprising for the age in which the romance had been composed when Vasco da Gama was yet to be born to rediscover India for the West.

India in England after Her Rediscovery by Vasco da Gama

After the Portuguese navigator Vasco da Gama discovered a new sea route and was able to reach the Indian shores in 1498, the western passage to India became much easier than it ever was in the ancient or medieval days. After that great event more and more Europeans started visiting India and establishing political and commercial contact with her, and England did not lag behind in this field. The first Englishman to have visited India and spent some time there is to my knowledge one Father Stevens who sent back home in the form of letters a lot of information incorporating his experiences in India, curious enough to create the interest of his countrymen in the affairs of India. Stevens, it must be placed on record, had a linguistic expertise and that goes to explain the strange phenomenon that though he was the first Englishman to arrive in India, he took no time in learning some of the languages of India; his mastery of the Marathi language was so thorough that he wrote a Purana centering on the life and teachings of Lord Christ called *Khristapurāṇa* in Marathi. The Christian Father had found Marathi to be the best and sweetest of all Indian tongues. Thus, Stevens emerges as the first English Orientalist whose work deserves to be acknowledged by all means.[7]

After Father Stevens, 4 other Englishmen arrived in India: John Newbury, Ralph Fitch, Thomas Leedes and James Story. The first of these had brought a letter from the British sovereign, Queen Elizabeth I, for the Moghul Emperor, Akbar. This letter is of a very great historic value because it paved the way for the establishment of the commercial relationship between England and India in 1600 in the form of the launching of the British East India Company. The letter expresses the aims and objectives of the English embassy of Newbury and party in a very stately style. The Great Queen tells the Grand Moghul in a very friendly tone: 'The great affection which our Subjects have to visit the most

distant places of the world not without goodwill and intention to introduce the trade of merchandise of all nations whatsoever they can, by which meanes the mutual and friendly traffique of merchandize on both sides may come, is the cause that the bearer of this letter, John Newbury, joyntly with those that be in his company, with a courteous and honest boldness doe repaire to the borders of your Empire.'

The English embassy was well received by Emperor Akbar but except for Ralph Fitch none of the other 3 English visitors to the Moghul court could reach back home. However, the letters of Newbury and those of Fitch, which were published by Richard Hakluyt (*c.* 1552–1616) the English geographer, in his famous book *The Principall Navigations, Voiages and Discoveries of the English Nation* (1589) and which again appeared in the work of Samuel Purchas (*c.* 1575–1626) called *Purchas His Pilgrimage* (1613), provided a lot of information to the Englishmen in their own language regarding the fabulous wealth, customs, manners and chief places of India and the East. Interest in India and the East in England had been created by the English translation of Marco Polo's tales and those of other French and Italian travellers, especially those of Ludovico di Varthema, made available in Richard Eden's *History of Travayle* (arranged and completed by Richard Wills and printed in London in 1577) but the narration of the English travellers augmented and intensified this interest beyond measure. In 1600, the British East India Company was granted a charter by Queen Elizabeth to establish trade relationship with the East and after a very long and patient effort put in my Hawkins and Roe, the English traders succeeded in getting a license from the court of the Moghul Emperor, Jahangir, to carry on their commercial activity in India. The first British factory to be established in India was at Surat, which came into existence in the early seventeenth century. After the establishment of the factory at Surat there started a ceaseless intercourse between the English and the Indians. However, no serious effort was made by any member of the British East India Company until the

restoration of Charles II to the British throne to understand the manners and culture of the Indians. During the reign of Charles II a Cambridge scholar, John Marshall, arrived in India in the closing years of the first decade of the Restoration. He was a fast friend of the famous Cambridge Platonist, Henry More, to whom he used to send his 'notes' on the religious and mystical beliefs and practices of India. Professor Shafat Ahmad Khan of the University of Allahabad has beautifully categorized and systematized these notes, preserved in the British Museum Library.[8] It is clear from these notes that Marshall had mastered Persian and through the Persian translations of the Sanskrit texts he was trying to learn about the cultural heritage of India. He deserves to be recognized as the first British Orientalist as he was the first to have a Sanskrit text—*Shrīmadbhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa*—rendered into English. Of course, he did not do it from the Sanskrit original but from its Persian translation with the help of a Brahmin from Patna called Madhusudan. This was the first translation of an Indian text into a European language if we ignore the Dutch rendering of some verses of Bhartṛihari done in the mid-sixteenth century.[9]

Another significant visitor to India from England under the aegis of the East India Company in the latter half of the seventeenth century was John Ovington (1653–1731). He did not translate any Indian text into English but he enlightened the British masses on the way of life of the Indians—religious, social and cultural, through his observations incorporated in his book *A Voyage to Suratt in the Year 1689* which was published in 1696. The Court of Minutes of 16 April 1697, mentions this publication of Ovington. The measure of the popularity of this book in Great Britain is the reference to it made by Nahum Tate in *Absalom and Achitophel* Part II, written in collaboration with John Dryden, the greatest writer of his age. The following lines from that famous poem pay a very high tribute to Ovington:

You have so lively your Discoveries writ,
We read and voyage with you as we sit,

With you hoise sail and reach the Indian shore,
The real scene cou'd scarce delight us more.

Ovington is highly appreciative of the Hindu way of life, their philosophy, their medical system and their astrology apart from giving vivid accounts of the famous cities of India —Bombay, Surat and Elephanta. He definitely prepared the English readers mentally for the writings of the Indians in various fields that were to appear in the next century through the medium of English. The following observation by Ovington must have aroused the curiosity of the British people regarding the richness of the Sanskrit lore:[10]

> Indeed the Bramins, who are derived from Bramon, who (they say) was one of the first men that inhabited the world, have a language used among them, but very difficult to be attained, which several of themselves therefore understand not. It is the learned language among them, called the Sanskrit, and is the same with them as Latin is with us. In this the records of their nation, mysteries of their theology, the books of their religion and philosophy, and the fables of their priests, are writ; wherein are several weak and loose opinions, discovering their ignorance both of the duration of this world, and the state and condition of the next.

Another Cambridge scholar—John Fryer—made a tour of the Coromandal coast and published his account of the manners of the Indians in the last quarter of the seventeenth century in the form of a book entitled *A New Account of East India and Persia: Nine Years 1672–81* (begun 1672 and finished 1681 published in London in 1698). In my view, this is the first book by an Englishman visiting India which contains a very faithful and close description of the Hindu sects of the south (particularly Karnataka region) and correctly transliterates Sanskrit words. It proyides Sanskrit names of the 7 days of the week and those of all the 12 months of the Hindus.[11]

Great interest in India had also been created by the publication of the memoirs of the French travellers Bernier who had spent a number of years from 1667 to 1675 and was a witness to the great events that were taking place in India, especially the assumption of emperial power by Aurangzeb from the great Moghul Emperor Shahjahan after decisively defeating his brothers and beheading Darashikoh whom the old emperor liked most and had intended as his successor. In fact, Bernier had 2 books to his credit. The first is called in English *A History of the Revolution in the Empire of the Great Moghul*; it was published in 1672. And the second book is *Memoirs of François Bernier* which appeared 1 year later. The *History of the Revolution* was very popular with the English readers; this is borne out by the fact that John Dryden wrote his heroic tragedy *Aurangzebe* (1676) on the basis of Bernier's eminent book. However, for our purpose the real interest of the book lay in its chapter entitled 'On the Gentiles of Hindostan' because it contains a lot of information on Hindu religion and philosophy, including a long and faithful account of the Indian *yogis* whose spiritual attainments the sceptical French doctor honestly attests.

The English readers, I suspect, had also got interested in Hindu philosophy and religion by the works of Joseph Glanvill (1636–80) whose *Lux Orientalis* (1662) pays a very rich tribute to Indian philosophy and mysticism. It was, however, *The Vanity of Dogmatising* (1663) by Glanvill which supplied the story of an Oxford lad who gave up his Oxford studies in favour of the Indian way of life represented by the Gypsies, presumably of Indian origin, because he believed that the Indian way alone could bring him real peace and serenity. The Victorian poet Matthew Arnold was so fascinated by this episode in Glanvill's book that he composed one of his most eminent poems—'The Scholar Gypsy.' But *Lux Orientalis*, I believe, definitely went a long way in arousing the interest of the Englishmen in coming to grips with Indian religion and philosophy.

Yet another man who was instrumental in creating in

Great Britain an intellectual atmosphere favourable to the reception of the Hindu thought—religious and metaphysical, was a great nobleman, Sir William Temple (1628–99), the patron of the eminent prose writer of the Augustan age, namely, Jonathan Swift (1667–1745). Two rather longish essays by Sir William Temple deserve being mentioned here—*Essay on Heroic Virtue* and *Ancient and Modern Learning*. The first refers to India several times very admiringly and the second essay describes in detail Indian wisdom and its superiority to Greek wisdom which, Sir William Temple asserted, was derived from the former. It appears that the English nobleman had acquired a very intimate knowledge of Brahmanic systems and had realized their inherent worth. I feel convinced that the Augustan poet Isaac Watts (1674–1748) was inspired by Sir William Temple in his composition of his famous poem 'The Indian Philosopher'. The following stanzas from this poem very clearly and authentically bring out the essence of the Brahmin way of life:

O'er the broad lands, and cross the tide
On fancy's airy horse I ride
  (Sweet rapture of my mind)
Till on the banks of Ganges Flood
In a tall ancient grove I stood
  For sacred use design'd.

Hard by, a venerable priest,
Risen with his god, the Sun from rest,
  Awoke his morning song:
Thrice he conjur'd the murmuring stream
The birth of souls was all his theme
  And half divine his tongue.

He sang the eternal rolling flame
the vital mass, that still the same
  Does all our mind compose;
But shap'd in twice ten thousand frames
Thence differing souls in jarring names
  And jarring tempers rose.

The mighty power that prim'd the mind
One mould for every two design'd
And best the new-born pair;
This be a match for this, he said
Then down he sent the souls he made
To seek their bodies here.

But parting from this warm abode
They lost their fellows on the road
And never joined their hands:
Ah cruel chance and crossing fates
Our Eastern souls have dropped their mates
On Europe's barbarous lands.

Happy the Youth that finds the bride,
Whose birth is to his own allied,
The sweetest joy of life;
But oh the crowds of wretched souls
Fetter'd to minds of different moulds
And chained to eternal strife.

Watts's poem clearly shows that he had a quite dependable kind of knowledge regarding the Brahmin way of life. Since he was a very popular hymn-writer, the best of his hymn being 'O God, our help in ages past', we can rest assured that his 'Indian Philosopher' was a widely read poem and played a vital role in creating English fascination with India and her spiritual richness from which the English race could derive a lot of benefits, as Sir William Temple and others thought.

Yet another work which profoundly influenced the English mind in its appreciation of the Hindu way of life was *The letters Writ by a Turkish Spy* in 8 volumes (London, 1694) by G.P. Marana, W. Bradshaw and others. In this book India served as a basis for a satire against the manners and morals of Europe. Letters III.II.xxi, III.III.xiii, V.II.iii, V.III.xviii, VI.III.xviii, VII.I.xxi, VII.III.vi, VII.III.xi, VIII.IV.xi and VIII.IV.xii pay a high tribute to Hindu wisdom and reveal a surprisingly intimate acquaintance with the speculative thought of India. Sir William Temple is likely to have obtained

his information regarding India from this book as Marana had published his *Letters* in French as early as 1684–86.

As we pass from the seventeenth century and go through the English records of the eighteenth, we find that the English mind is able to grasp the finer points of Hindu philosophy and religion, of course, slowly but definitely steadily. In the first half of the eighteenth century, we do not find many documents by English hands dealing with India and her culture. The 2-volume work entitled *New Account of the East Indies* (1727) by an English interlopor (i.e. an Englishman trading with other countries independently in his individual capacity without proper authority from the East India Company) is the only authentic record of Indian manners and morals by an Englishman who had lived in India from 1688 to 1723. His name was Alexander Hamilton. Hamilton's work describes in detail the religious practices of the Hindus—their beliefs and their thinking on supramundane subjects. However, Hamilton does not seem to be a master of any of the Indian languages nor does he provide any acquaintance with any Indian text—religious or literary, though he talks a great deal about *yoga* and *yogis* and the system of burning of wives on the pyres of their husbands called *satī*.

References to India in the literary works of the early eighteenth century England are numerous indeed. Pope, Addison, Swift, Thomson—all refer to India and quite frequently. That goes to prove that the English mind was considerably occupied by India. In the first canto of *The Rape of the Lock* (lines 33-34), Pope refers to the gems of India:

> This casket India's glowing gems unlocks,
> And all Arabia breathes from yonder box.

In 'Windsor Forest', (lines 29–32), an allusion to India has been made:

> Let India boast her Plants, nor envy we
> The weeping Amber or the balmy Tree,
> While by our Oaks the precious Loads are born,
> And Realms commanded which those Trees adorn.

Pope seems to have been aware of the contemporary political upheavals in India of the times. In the same poem at lines 365-66 he seems to be referring to the wars that were of late waged by the Moghul Emperor Aurangzeb against the rising Maratha powers:

> Let barb'rous Ganges arm a servile Train
> Be mine the Blessings of a peaceful Reign.

The poet comments on the indolence of the Indian kings in 'Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady' lines 17–22.

> Most souls, this true, but peep out once an age,
> Dull sullen pris'ners in the body's cage;
> Dimm lights of life that burn a length of years,
> Useless, unseen, as lamps in sepulchres;
> Like Eastern Kings a lazy state they keep,
> And close confin'd to their own palace sleep.

Reference to India are legion in the pages of *The Spectator* by Addison and Steele. In Addison's essay on 'The Royal Exchange' itself there are numerous allusions to India and things Indian:

> 1. I have often been pleased to hear disputes adjusted between an inhabitant of Japan and an alderman of London, or to see a subject of the *Great Moghul* entering into a league with one of the Czar of Muscovy.
>
> 2. The fruits of Portugal are corrected by the products of Barbadoes: the infusion of a China plant sweetened with the pith of an *Indian cane.*
>
> 3. ...we repaid our bodies by the drugs of America, and repose ourselves under *Indian canopies.*

In 'The Complaint; or, Night Thoughts on Life, Death, and Immortality' by Edward Young (1683–1765), too, we can find references to India. For example, in the section called 'Night VI' we have the following lines:

Where, thy true treasure? Gold says, 'Not in me;'
And, 'Not in me', the diamond. Gold is poor;
India insolvent: Seek it in thyself!

Even in John Gay's opera (i.e. *Beggar's Opera*, 1728), there is a reference to Indian heat in a love-song, sung by the character Polly Peachum, addressed to the highwayman Macheath:

Were I sold on Indian soil,
Soon as the burning day was closed,
I could mock the sultry toil,
When on my charmer's breast reposed.
(Act I, scene XII).

But William Somerville (1675–1742) provides a spirited description of a big beat for lions, tigers, wolves, bears and pards, made from Delhi, in his epical poem *The Chase* (1735), recalling the huntings indulged in by the Moghul emperors, as narrated in Bernier's *Memoirs*.

However, these references to India in the literary works of the Augustan age do not evince any deep understanding of the literary and speculative traditions of India. This is because no English translation of any famous text of India had appeared apart from John Marshall's efforts to translate the *Shrīmadbhāgvata-Mahāpurāṇa* from some Persian version of the Sanskrit text. Also, no English scholar had tried to present before the English readers any book dealing with Indian mythology, literature or philosophy even in a casual manner. And Marshall's translation was lying in a manuscript form, not available to the public at large. In France, on the other hand, many works had appeared, dealing with the religious tenets and philosophical ideas of the Indians. Mention may be made of D'Herbelot's *Bibliotheque Orientale* and Picart's *Ceremonis et Coutumes Religieuses*. Even Bernier had been able to describe the outlines of Hindu philosophy and religious thought quite faithfully and with perfect understanding. The reason behind this was, in all probability, the fact that the French were quite sympathetic to the Indians

and befriended them easily whereas the English were a little inhibited in their relationship with the Indians and naturally the latter were not easily prepared to reveal their secrets to the former (i.e. the English).

However, the Englishmen in India soon realized that if they were to succeed there as a political force they must study the psyche of the vast majority of the people called Hindus—their religion, their mythology and their philosophy. But this was not possible without the mastery of Sanskrit and other languages of the Hindus. In the latter half of the eighteenth century therefore we find more and more Englishmen trying to achieve proficiency in Sanskrit. This development coincided with the political victories won by them in Arcot and elsewhere. Robert Orme (1728–1801), the famous author of *The History of the Military Transactions of the British Nation in Indostan from 1745* (1763), had drawn up 'A General Idea of the Government and People of Hindostan' as early as 1752 but it could be published only posthumously in 1805. Though Orme did not know Sanskrit, he had acquired perfect mastery over Persian and presents the essentials of Hinduism collected from Hindu works that were available to him in their Persian translation, including passages from the Upanishads done into Persian by Dara Shikoh in 1656. Similarly, J.Z. Holwell, Governor of Bengal, who had at first presented the image of India as a hell in his account of the 'Black Hole' tragedy of Calcutta in *A Genuine Narrative of the Deplorable Deaths of the English Gentlemen and others, who were suffocated in the Black Hole* (London, 1758), surpringly enough, came out with a very sympathetic picture of the Brahmins and of Hindus as a whole in his *Interesting Historical Events, relative to the Provinces of Bengal and the Empire of Indostan*, 2nd ed. 3 parts (London, 1766–71). But the first Englishman who seems to have mastered the Sanskrit language to a large extent was Alexander Dow who was all praise for Indian culture and the richness of the Sanskrit language. He brought out the first volume of *The History of Hindostan* in 1768 in which he translated the work of the Muslim histo-

rian Farista on the history of medieval India. This is the first translation into English of an Indian text from the original version (in the present case from the Persian version). For the Hindu period of Indian history Dow finds Farishta undependable and therefore writes his own history of the Hindus, collected from various Hindu sources, presumably the *Mahābhārata*, the Purāṇas and Kalhaṇa's *Rājataraṅgiṇī*. He provides nearly a 3-page account of the famous King of Ujjaini—Vikramāditya. However, what is most remarkable for purposes of the present argument is the most scholarly 'Introduction' to Dow's epoch-making book, containing the Sanskrit alphabet, specimens of the Sanskrit verse, including some verses from the *Ṛgveda* and the most famous passage from the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, namely, '*Vāsānsi jīrṇani yathā vihāya*' from the work's second chapter. The 'Introduction' provides a very detailed account of the Hindu mythology, describing all the famous members of the Hindu pantheon, giving the etymological meanings of their various synonyms. However, the most significant part of the 'Introduction' is the description of the various schools of Indian philosophy—Nyāya, Sāmkhya, Vedānta, Buddhism and Jainism. Dow's book deserves a great and exalted place in the history of the English understanding of Indian letters. Much before Wilkins and Jones he had provided the Englishmen a very authentic account of the achievements of the Hindu mind in the realms of religion and philosophy, besides introducing the Sanskrit script. Indeed, he was the first Sanskrit scholar from the British nation, who had revealed the secrets of the Hindu wisdom for the first time in a very impartial manner.

Another scholar whom England sent to India and who was able to master the intricate language of the Brahmins was N.B. Halhed, the author of *A Code of Gentoo Laws*. The work of Halhed was the result of the administrative vision of the first Governor-General of British India, namely, Warren Hastings, who was of the view that the Indians could be best ruled in accordance with their own moral and legal norms. With a view to supplying the Indians with the most

satisfactory administrative and judicial system in accordance with their own traditions, Hastings had appointed a large body of Brahmin scholars to compile a common moral and legal code from the various Hindu texts. When the compiled text was prepared, it was rendered into Persian. It was this Persian version of the compiled Sanskrit text that Halhed rendered into English in 1776. However, there is no doubt whatsoever that Halhed knew Sanskrit. His mastery over the Sanskrit language is fully revealed in the learned 'Preface' to the *Code*, containing a lucid exposition of Hinduism in which Sanskrit terms have been freely used along with their English equivalents. Halhed also supplies, in the style of his predecessor Alexander Dow, a discourse on the long and rich tradition of Sanskrit letters. As specimens of the Sanskrit poetry, Halhed quotes many Sanskrit passages, including the famous passage from the *Bhagavad-Gītā* that Dow had cited, namely, the passage from the second chapter of the Hindu scripture, beginning with the words '*Vāsāṇsi jīrṇāni yathā vihāya*' along with its English verse translation. Since Halhed was a close friend of the famous eighteenth century dramatist—Richard Brinsley Sheridan (1751–1816), the author of the well-known comedy of manners, *The School for Scandal* (1777), Halhed's work became immensely popular in England. Sheridan's wife, Elizabeth Ann Linley, it must be mentioned here, was first engaged to Halhed. Halhed, along with Dow, was the pioneer of Oriental learning in general, and of Sanskrit learning in particular. Halhed's contribution to the Bengali language should not be lost sight of because he had written a book on Bengali also with a good deal of authority. But the 'Preface' to the *Gentoo Laws* along with Dow's 'Introduction' to his *History of Hindostan* should be recognized as the forerunner, in the truest sense of the term, of the real learning of Sanskrit that was to be undertaken by Charles Wilkins, Sir William Jones, H.T. Colebrooke, H.H. Wilson, William Monier-Williams, and Max Mueller. The guiding spirit of this movement was no doubt Warren Hastings who himself had achieved a great proficiency in the San-

skrit language and had translated some portions of the greatest epic—the *Mahābhārata*—as he himself informs us in his letter to Nathaniel Smith, the then Chairman of the British East India Company.[12] He was a very great admirer of the culture and civilization of India and wanted the West to appreciate the finer aspects of the wisdom of the Hindus. That he was a great lover of letters in general is clearly borne out by the fact that he had written a critique of P.B. Shelley's 'Hymn to Intellectual Beauty' long after his peaceful settlement in England after his sudden recall from his post as Governor-General of the British India and after the heroic battle that he gave to Burke and Fox and others in the British parliament, ultimately resulting in his exoneration.[13] Indians should be deeply grateful to him for at least the publication of the English prose translation of their most popular religious text, namely, the *Bhagavad-Gītā* because it was the publication of this text in a European language which opened the eyes of the West in regard to the ancient civilization that the text represented and to whose glories it bore a living testimony. India rose into the estimation of the sceptical West and came to be loved and revered by the creative writers of the Romantic era owing largely to the publication of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* by Charles Wilkins, a clerk in the Bengal establishment of the British East India Company. But such a revolutionary work as the English translation of a very ancient text of the Hindus would never have seen the light had Warren Hastings not recommended its publication to Nathaniel Smith, the then Chairman of the British East India Company.[14] Thus, Warren Hastings deserves our gratitude and admiration as much as the actual translator who had been granted leave to reside in Varanasi by the Governor-General to conduct his study of the Sanskrit language at the feet of the Brahmins there and obtain a copy of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* from their closely guarded treasury for the purpose of its translation into English for the benefit of the world. The publication of the *Gītā* in the native language of the English[15] proved to be a virtual renaissance, for it made the English readers highly

inquisitive about the literary works of ancient India. Thus, it opened the floodgates of Indian publications in London. It was soon followed by Sir William Jone's translation of Kālidāsa's *Abhijnānaśākuntalam* first in Latin in 1789 and then a year later in English under the title of *Çakuntala*. Soon, Wilkins made available to Englishmen in their own language the collection of animal fables called 'Hitopadeśa' and Jones came out with his English prose version of *Manusmṛti*. Since then there has been a ceaseless process of translating Indian works of all times into English. Evidently, the publication of the *Gītā* in 1785 was a revolution, no less significant than the French Revolution which took place 4 years later. The thesis of the present book is that the English Romantic movement was influenced by the high ideals of life set forth in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* as much as it was shaped and guided by the philosophy of liberty, equality and fraternity. Scholars and critics are never tired of pointing out the impact of the French Revolution on the English Romantic poets but they never mention the Indian text anywhere in their accounts of that great movement. The present writer seeks to place the records straight. He will provide documentary proofs that each of the English romantic poets had read the *Bhagavad-Gītā* in Wilkins's prose version and had used its ethical and spiritual ideas in his poems. The Indian text was part of the intellectual environment of the times as reviews of it in the popular journals and magazines of the day such as the *Monthly Magazine* and *The British Critic* clearly demonstrate.[16] But before that difficult task is undertaken, it would be worthwhile to direct the readers to the argument, set forth in the first chapter of this book which seeks to introduce the work itself—its authorship, its date, its context, its contents and its themes.

Notes and References

1. See Rebert Sencourt, *India in English Literature*, Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton Kent & Co. Ltd., London, 1923, p. 33. It must be noted that Alcuin or Albinus (English name, Eal-

hwin, AD 735–804) was a great theologian and man of letters of his times. His reputation as an educationist was so high that his contemporary—Charlemagne, King of the Franks, invited him to his country and appointed him as his coadjutor. Alcuin had met the Frank King at Parma in 781. The scholar from Yorkshire thus became a continental figure and wrote a large number of litergical, grammatical, hagiological and philosophical works and several poems.

2. Ibid., p. 33.
3. Ibid., p. 33.
4. See on this point Richard Hole, *Remarks on the Arabian Nights' Entertainments*, London, 1797, pp. 239–48. Hole had located the ultimate origins of the nuclei of the 'Merchant's Tale' and the 'Squire's Tale' in the *Jatak tales*. Hole's findings have been confirmed by later researches. See F.N. Robinson, (ed.), *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, Boston, 1857, pp. 722, 729, 732.
5. *The Voiage and Travaile of Sir John Mandeville* (1377), p. 85.
6. The sage Dindimus of the romance, under discussion, is none other than the Gymnosophist Dandimis, the corrupt form of the Sanskrit 'DandīSanyasī', referred to by the companions of Alexander. It was this sage who had prevailed upon another sage Kalanos to accompany the Greek conqueror to Greece.
7. Vide H.G. Rawlinson, *The Legacy of India*, op. cit., for more information of Father Stevens's connection with India. The *National Biography*, Vol. VIII also supplies a good deal of information on Stevens. Vide Sir Leslie Stephen, Sir Sidney Lee (eds.), *The Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1921-22.
8. See Shafat Ahmad Khan (ed.) *John Marshall in India*, London, 1927.
9. A little before John Marshall a Dutch Calvinist preacher in Paliacotta, near Madras, had reported on the ancient Brahmanical literature. His name was Abraham Rogerius. His work has become famous under its shortened title as *An Open-door to Heathendom* but its original title was quite lengthy and somewhat clumsy: 'De open-deure tot het verborgen heydendom ofte waerachtigh vertoogh van het leven ende zeden mitsgaders de religie ende godsdients der Bramines op de Cust Chormandel; ende de landen daar omtrent.' It was published

in 1651 at Leiden. It is worth recording that Abraham Roger discovered the seventh century Sanskrit lyricist Bhartrihari and translated some extracts with the help of the Brahmin Padmanābha, through the medium of Portuguese. This indirect translation of 200 verses of *Vairagyaśataka* and *Nītiśataka* has been called the first translation of a Sanskrit work into a European language. However, a good account of the religion and languages of the Hindus had been provided in a document entitled *Verhaal van de Tweede Reis van Vasco da Gama naar India* which was published as early as 1502 and in the *Itinerario* of Van Linschoten in 1596.

10. See John Ovington's *A Voyage to Suratt in the Year 1689*, edited by J.P. Guha, Associated Publishing House, New Delhi, 1984, pp. 109–10.
11. John Fryer, *A New Account of East-India and Persia*, London, 1697, p. 186. Indeed, the whole of Chapter VI of the work is very interesting: 'A Special Chrography and History of East-India.'
12. See Sir Charles Wilkins, *Bhagavad-Geeta*, op. cit., p. 7.
13. Vide Edward Dowden, *Life of Shelley*, 2 volume, Vol. I, p. 218, footnote, which reads as follows:

    > It is perhaps worth noting as a curious fact that in 1718 Shelley has for critic of his *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty* a Governor-General of India—The Marquis of Hastings.

14. Hastings's recommendatory letter, addressed to Mr Nathaniel Smith, the then Chairman of the English East India Company, is available in Charles Wilkins's translation of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, covering pp. 4–15 of the book.
15. Until Wilkins translated the *Bhagavad-Gītā* in English prose directly from the Sanskrit original, Englishmen had no concrete document of the great race of the Hindus to enable them to form a precise idea of the spiritual and intellectual mind of the Hindus; their previous knowledge of Hindu religion and philosophy was vague and hazy. In this sense the publication of Wilkins's *Gītā* can be said to have brought about a second Renaissance in England and the rest of the Western world.
16. Numerous periodicals of the eighteenth century gave large coverage to Indian religion, mythology and philosophy. When Wilkins's *Gītā* appeared in London in 1785 in English prose, most of them published quite favourable reviews of the Hindu

philosophy as revealed in the *Gītā*. The *Monthly Magazine* (1796–1800) and the *British Critic* (1793–1800) were especially and remarkably enthusiastic about the Hindu text. The periodical *Monthly Review*, 1750-51, 1770–1800, was equally receptive. Within 2 years of the appearance of Wilkins's *Gītā*, the *Monthly Review* LXXVI (1787), pp. 208–10, published a very friendly review of the work. The *British Critic* III (February 1794, pp. 154 and 156 published two fairly favourable reviews. In its eighth issue (November 1796), p. 541) it brought out another review of Wilkins's *Gītā*. And again, in its ninth issue (March 1797, p. 232) it came out with yet another review of the work. Thus, these popular magazines contributed a lot to the revival of interest in Indian religion and philosophy in England. It is worth recording that these periodicals were also promoting the newly rising Romantic poets like Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey, Blake and others, and were subscribed to by them.

William Blake and the Bhagavad-Gītā

In his study of William Blake entitled *Fearful Symmetry*, Northrop Frye observes without any reservations whatsoever: 'Blake was among the first of European idealists able to link his own tradition of thought with the *Bhagavad-Gītā*'[1] This candid remark of Frye is very significant because it highlights the role of the *Gītā* in shaping the thoughts of the eldest Romantic poet of England who had wielded a very great influence on a very long line of English poets of the Romantic era—Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley and Keats.

Blake seems to have caught hold of the Sanskrit text in its English translation by (Sir) Charles Wilkins as soon as it was printed in London by C. Nourse, opposite Catherine Street in the Strand, in the year 1785, published under the aegis of the English East India Company, at the recommendation of Warren Hastings, the first Governor-General of British India. This is clear from the fact that Blake had made a drawing of Wilkins in the process of translating the Indian text. This drawing formed item No. X in the exhibition of his paintings, organized by Blake himself in the city of London in the year 1809. All the paintings exhibited there were listed and discussed in detail by the painter in his *Descriptive Catalogue*. Describing the main objectives and themes of Blake's said exhibition, Frye lists among many other aims 'the bringing of Swedenborg Jacob Boehme and the *Bhagavad-Gītā* to public attention.'[2] Another authority on Blake, P. Berger, Doctores Lettres, Professor of English Language and Literature at the University of Lycee and Lecturer at the University of Bordeaux, in his eminent book entitled

William Blake: Poet and Mystic acknowledges in the thirteenth chapter on the sources of Blake's philosophical doctrines the similarity between the thoughts of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* and those expressed in the poetry of William Blake.[3] He also asserts that Blake's 'Notes' in the *Descriptive Catalogue* on the drawing called 'The Brahmins' seems to show that the English poet was acquainted at any rate with one translation of the Hindu scripture.[4]

Blake paid a rich tribute to the sages of ancient India indirectly when he challenged the monopoly of the sacredness of the Jewish religion: 'The antiquities of every Nation under Heaven, are no less sacred than that of the Jews...How other antiquities came to be neglected and disbelieved, while those of the Jews are collected and arranged, is an enquiry worthy both of the Antiquarian and the Divine.'[5] As early as 1783, he had formed a very favourable impression of India which he articulated in his poem entitled 'To the Muses', a piece in the volume of poems called *Poetical Sketches*. I quote the relevant lines:

> Whether on Ida's shady brow,
> Or in the chambers of the East,
> The chambers of the sun, that now
> From ancient melody have ceased.
> (Stanza I)

The poet seems to have been enamoured of India for he allots that country a very prominent position in Plate 31 of his epic *Milton* Book II where he sings:

> And all Nations wept in affliction Family by Family;
> Germany wept towards France & Italy: England wept
> & trembled
> Towards America: *India rose up from his golden bed:*
> *As one awakened in the night.*
> (emphasis added)

The use of the expression 'golden bed' in the italicized portion of the quotation here is pointer to Blake's awareness of ancient India's superiority—material, religious, cultural and

spiritual. The analogy of an awakened man in the night, used for India, clearly shows Blake's acknowledgement of India's intellectual and spiritual advancement much ahead of the nations of Europe which were only weeping and bewailing and suffering from utter inertia. This is, indeed, a very frank and fearless appraisal of India's past glory by a poet whose country was trying to establish its sway in India by denying it its just priority in the fields of ethics, religion and civilization and by painting it as a country of savages, bereft of all moral and civil codes as well as literary and cultural traditions. But notwithstanding the British policy in India, Blake fearlessly acclaimed India as a great nation having a glorious past. His love of India is further manifested in his denominations of the 3 levels of civilization in *Milton*, namely, Golgonooza, Allamanda and Bowlahoola. The first represents art proper and is in society what the brain is in the individual. The word 'Golgonooza' seems to be an echo of the place-name 'Golconda' in India, traditionally renowned for diamond-cutting (it is near Hyderabad, the capital of Andhra Pradesh). Golconda, being associated with a very subtle artwork (i.e. diamond-cutting) is a fit symbol of the artistic aspect of civilization. 'Allamanda' appears to be named after Ahmadabad, a famous city of Gujarat, known for its commercial activity for ages. Allamanda stands for the stomach of Albion or human civilization and is naturally representative of commerce and business. Similarly, 'Bowlahoola' which represents the heart of Albion (i.e. human civilization) and is a symbol of creative and imaginative activity in man recalls to our mind the word 'Bulanala'—a place in Benares (now Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh, India). Frye recognized the Indian ring in the names coined by Blake to denote the various aspects of human civilization but he failed to identify them.[6] What I want to emphasize here is that Blake chose India as the source of all the aspects of human civilization of his imagination.

Blake seems to have acquired some knowledge of the mythology of India. This is clear from his use of 'Brama' (i.e. Brahmā, a member of the Hindu trinity, the other two being

Shiva and Vishnu) in the *Song of Los: Africa*: 'Rintrah gave Abstract Philosophy to Brama in the East.'

I do not know if Blake was aware of the Vedic concept of 'Ṛta' which signifies cosmic order but what he says about the imparting of metaphysical knowledge to Brahmā by Rintrah is really amazing for Brahmā, the originator of all the 4 Vedas, must have been instructed by the cosmic order itself. If this interpretation is correct, we cannot help marvelling at Blake's knowledge of the intellectual and religious traditions of the Indian subcontinent. It is no wonder if such a well-informed poet as Blake should have studied the most popular of the Indian philosophical texts on its appearance in London in English prose and derived thoughts and ideas from it. I would like to discuss the thoughts of *Gītā* in William Blake under the following points:

1. The *Triguṇa* theory of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* seems to have made a great appeal to the poetic mind of Blake. According to S. Foster Damon,[7] one of the Zoas, namely, Tharmas, has been named after some concept of the *Gītā*. Damon does not specify the concept of the *Gītā*, but if he is correct, then 'Tharmas' has been named after *Tamasa* or *Tamoguṇa* which has been described along with the other 2 *guṇas* in the fourteenth chapter of the Indian text. The question is 'how did Blake catch hold of the Sanskrit word and coin with its help the denomination of the Zoa concerned?' The answer is that Wilkins while translating the *Gītā*, by and large, did not translate the technical terms of the original; he simply transliterated them. The 3 qualities of Nature appear in his book as *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. Thus, Blake got the original Sanskrit word *tamasa* and with its help coined his own word—'Tharmas'.

The '*triguṇa*' theory of the *Gītā* can also be found at the back of Blake's 3-fold classification of the children of Los in his epic *Milton* (p. 7): the Elect, the Redeemed and the Reprobate. Just as the members of the Hindu Trinity of (Vishnu, Brahma and Shiva) represent *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, respectively, in Blake, too, the 3 sons of Los—Satan, Palamabron

and Rintrah—stand for *satoguṇa*, *rajoguṇa* and *tamoguṇa*, respectively. Satan, the mild one, can be identified with Vishnu for like Vishnu, he is peaceful and peace-loving, a believer in the established order and laws of the society, and is ready for a compromise in all things. Palamabron on the other hand, quite like Brahmā, is an inspired prophet, obeys the dictates of his imagination only, says what he feels like saying without any fear whatsoever, and has his will done without destroying the social structure in which he is placed. But Rintrah, like Rudra or Shiva, is a rebel and lives in a desert like a hermit; he is a reprobate, accepting no social norms and established beliefs.

2. Blake's famous doctrine of 'Emanation' is ultimately to be traced to the *ansha-anshī* relationship that exists, according to the Hindu belief, between God and the soul. The doctrine of Emanation purports to state that all things emanate or flow from some Supreme Principle of which they are partial and inferior copies. Enitharmon, for example, is the Emanation of Los because she has emanated from Los. Similarly, Urizen is the Emanation of Eternity, having torn himself from it. The doctrine, in its essentials, is foreshadowed in the seventh verse of the fifteenth chapter of the Gītā which runs as follows:

ममैवांशो जीवलोके जीवभूतः सनातनः।
मनःषष्ठानीन्द्रियाणि प्रकृतिस्थानि कर्षति।।

mamaivanśo jīvaloke jīvabhūtaḥ sanātanaḥ
manaḥṣaṣṭhāni 'ndriyaṇi prakṛtisthāni karṣati

Wilkins had rendered it as follows:[8]

> It is even a portion of myself that in this animal world is the universal spirit of all things. It draweth together the five organs and the mind, which is the sixth, that it may obtain a body, and that it may leave it again.

In the verse given here, Lord Krishna explains to Arjuna that all the embodied souls are only manifestations of a fraction of His Being. Thus, the verse contains the seeds of

the Emanation doctrine and in all probability it encouraged Blake to formulate his theory and exploit it poetically on a very grand scale.

3. Allied to the doctrine of Emanation is Blake's eloquently proclaimed view that 'God is Man and exists in us and we in Him.' Blake may have learnt it from the Sufi saints of the Middle East whose views had become available to Europe, specially to the German mystic Jacob Boehme whose works in the English translation of Reverend William Law (published in 1764) were read avidly by our poet. But the theory is Upanishadic: the formulae such as तत्त्वमसि (*tattvamasi*), अहं ब्रह्मास्मि (*Aham Brahmāsmi*) and शिवोऽहम् (*Shivo'ham*) are the earliest recorded statements of the mystical experiences of the Indian sages. But the *Bhagavad-Gītā* 6.29 is the most powerful expression of the view:

सर्वभूतस्थमात्मानं सर्वभूतानि चात्मनि।
ईक्षते योगयुक्तात्मा सर्वत्र समदर्शनः।।

sarvabhūtasthamātmānam sarvabhūtani cātmani
īkśate yogayuktātmā sarvatra samadarśanaḥ.

Wilkins rendered this verse in the following words:[9]

> The man whose mind is enbued with this devotion, and looketh on all things alike, beholdeth the supreme soul in all things, and all things in the Supreme Soul.

In the verse here, the word *ātman* has to be understood as a synonym of *Brahman* or God, the Supreme Soul; in many Upanishads and most prominently in the *Kathopanishad*, *ātman* and *Brahman* have been regarded as signifying the same thing. Thus, Blake's assertion that 'God is Man and exists in us and we in Him' is truly Upanishadic and has the backing of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, his favourite book, enshrining Eastern wisdom.

4. Blake's theory propounded in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, 23, namely, 'The worship of God is: Honouring His gifts in other men, each according to his genius, and loving the greatest men best; those who envy or calumniate

great men hate God for there is no other God', recalls to our minds the chapter called 'Vibhūtiyoga' of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, particularly the forty-first verse which runs as follows:

यद्यद्विभूतिमत् सत्त्वं श्रीमदूर्जितमेव वा।
तद् तदेवावगच्छ त्वं मम तेजोंऽशसम्भवम्।।

yadyadvibhūtimat sattvam śrīmat ūrjitameva vā
tadtad evāvagacch tvaṁ mama tejo'nśasambhavam

Wilkins had done it into English rather tamely in the following words:[10]

> (And learn, O Arjoon, that every being which is worthy of distinction and pre-eminence, is the produce of the portion of my glory.)

The purport of the verse is that wherever we come across a pre-eminently beautiful, heroic or glorious person or thing, we must regard it as the manifestation of the Supreme Being and worship it. Dr Radhkrishnan's comments on the verse of the *Gītā* are worth quoting:[11]

> While all things are supported by God, things of beauty and splendour reveal Him more than others. Every deed of heroism, every life of sacrifice, every work of genius, is a revelation of the Divine. The epic moments of a man's life are inexplicably beyond the finite mind of man.

The whole chapter called 'Vibhūtiyoga' from which this verse has been quoted is an elaboration of what Radhakrishnan has suggested. The Lord says, for example, in Verse 37: 'Of the Vṛṣṇīs I am Vāsudeva; of the Pāndavas I am the winner of the wealth (Arjoon); of the sages I am Vyāsa and of the poets I am the poet Uśanā'. And a little earlier in the Verse 31 the Lord declares: 'Of the warriors I am Ram.' No wonder in India, at any rate, all the eminent revelations of the Lord, mentioned in the 'Vibhūtiyoga' are the objects of sincere worship till this day, whether it is Vyāsa, Nārada, Rāma, Skanda, Bhrigu, Airāvata or Uccaihśrava. Blake must

have found the 'Vibhūtiyoga' of *Gītā* extremely interesting and he must have felt strengthened in formulating his theory regarding the Godhead of the great men.

5. Blake's concept of the Great Whore is virtually the concept of *Māyā* whose veil must be lifted before we could hope to enter the City of God. A fifteenth-century mystic poet of India—Kabīradāsa—had called *Māyā* a whore and Kabīradāsa was only maintaining an Upanishadic tradition of which the *Bhagavad-Gītā* is a significant part. About *Māyā* Kabīra says in one of his famous songs:

1. रमैया की दुलहिन लूटा बज़ार

(Ramaiyā ki dulhina lūta bajāra)

and in another song he says a bit more aggressively:

2. माया महा ठगिनि हम जानी

(Māyā mahā ṭhagini hama jānī)

What Kabīra has maintained in the lines cited here about *Māyā* is in full accord with the position of the *Gītā* on the issue. The work suggests in several verses the deceptive nature of *Māyā* which it describes as a lower aspect of the Godhead, capable of diverting the soul from God's Higher aspect and true form by means of its *guṇas*. In the thirteenth and fourteenth verses of its seventh chapter, it gives an account of *Māyā* in the following words:

त्रिभिर्गुणमयैर्भावैरेभिः सर्वमिदं जगत्।
मोहितं नाभिजानाति मामेभ्यः परमव्ययम्।।
दैवी ह्येषा गुणमयी मम माया दुरत्यया।
मामेव ये प्रपद्यन्ते मायामेतां तरन्ति ते।।

tribhir gunamayair bhāvair ebhir sarvamidam jagat
mohitam nābhijānāti māmebhyaḥ paramavyayam.
daivī hyeṣā guṇamayīmama mayā duratyayā
māmeva ye prapadyante māyāmetam taranti te.

Wilkins had rendered them thus:[12]

> The whole of this world, being bewildered by the influence of these three-fold qualities (Satva, Rajas, and

> Tamas) knoweth not that I am distinct from these and without decline. This my divine and supernatural power, endued with these principles and properties, is hard to be overcome. They who come unto me get the better of this supernatural influence.

Again, in the sixty-first verse of the eighteenth chapter of the *Gītā*, Lord Krishna refers to the bewildering Māyā through which God makes all beings move helplessly from one place to another as if they were mounted on a moving machine and therefore, bound to move much against their wishes:

> ईश्वरः सर्वभूतानां हृद्देशेऽर्जुन तिष्ठति।
> भ्रामयन्सर्वभूतानि यन्त्रारुढानि मायया।।
>
> *Īśvaraḥ sarvabhūtanam hṛddeśe'rjuna tiṣṭhati*
> *bhrāmayan sarvabhūtani yantrārūḍhāni māyayā.*

Wilkins had translated this verse in the following words:[13]

> The Lord abides in the hearts of all beings, O Arjun, causing them to turn round by His power called Māyā as if they were mounted on a machine.

I believe that Blake was somewhat influenced by the concept of *Māyā* as enunciated in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* in the creation of Vala who in various forms such as the Great Whore, Cybele, the mother of Nature, Mary, the Mother of Christ, the Scarlet Woman of the Apocalypse, Rahab the harlot or Nature, attracts and enchains the spirit of man. In the poem *Jerusalem*, for example, Albion, the symbol of man, feels himself enveloped and dominated by her so much so that he has become:

> The Tabernacle of Vala and her Temple,
> And not the Tabernacle and Temple of the Most High.

It is Vala who slays humanity by subduing it to the natural processes of all description and preserves its lifeless body by embalming it in moral laws. Like *Māyā*, Vala is all-conquering and baffling.

The concept of the three *guṇas* of which *Gītā*'s *Māyā* is made may be discerned in the concept of 'Antichrist' consisting of Satan, Rahab and Tirzah and 'Antichrist' is nothing but 'Vala'. Thus, there remains no doubt regarding the identity between 'Vala' and '*Māyā*'.

6. The 4 Zoas of Blake's vision can be very easily interpreted in terms of the 4 *Purushārthas* of the Hindus—*dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* and *mokṣha*. The first Zoa called 'Urizen', the first-born of Eternity, the state of self-knowledge, arising from experience, intelligence and reason, is clearly another name of what Hindus call *dharma*. The second Zoa called 'Luvah', the principle of human love, the state of the soul governed by the emotions, can be identified with the Hindu concept of *kāma* or love, pleasure and enjoyment. The third Zoa 'Tharmas', the 'vegitative power' and the state of the spirit, feeling only the blind forces of life and growth, is nothing but *artha* (literally wealth). And the fourth Zoa 'Urthona', the instinct that binds the spirit of each individual to that of the whole universe or the universal Spirit, is clearly the Hindu notion of *mokṣha* or liberation from the trammels of the world. According to Blake, the 4 Zoas are the chief states through which the human spirit passes: they are the regulating principles of life that each man has: 'Four Mighty Ones are in every Man.' *Purushārthas* are also the regulating principles of the life of each individual according to Hindu Dharmashāstras which the *Gītā* presumes and supports.

7. The English mystic echoes in the following verse from 'America: A Prophecy':

> Everything that lives is holy, life delights in life,
> Because the soul of sweet delight can never be defiled.

the thought of the very first verse of *Iśhāvāsyopaniṣad* which runs as follows:

ईशावास्यमिदं सर्वं यत्किञ्च् जगत्यां जगत्

Īśāvāsyamidaṁ sarvaṁ yatikinc jagatyām jagat

Robert Ernest Hume has rendered it thus:[14]

By the Lord (Īśa) enveloped must this all be—
Whatever moving thing there is in the moving world.

Blake must have read this verse of *Ìshāvāsyopaniṣad* in the English translation of Sir William Jones in the collected works of the great Orientalist, edited by Lord Teignmouth (1799), but more probably when Jones's translation appeared in its original form in 1795. Jones had rendered the verse under question in the following words:[15] 'By one Supreme Ruler is this universe pervaded; even every world in the whole circle.'

8. Just as the *Gītā* inculcates in us the feeling of abandoning the world of common experience and of devoting ourselves to the service of God through worshipful action, Blake also exhorts us to leave the world behind and to unite ourselves with the world of Art and Imagination which for him is the true abode of God. Blake says in no unequivocal terms in *A Vision of the Last Judgment*:

> We are in a world of Generation and Death, & this world we must cast off if we would be Painters such as Rafael, Mich. Angelo & the Ancient Sculptors; if we do not cast off this world we shall be only Venetian Painters who will be cast off and Lost from Art.

This passage of Blake seems to be a paraphrase of the fifty-eighth verse of the eighteenth chapter of the *Gītā*:

मच्चित्तः सर्वदुर्गाणि मत्प्रसादात्तरिष्यसि।
अथ चेत्त्वमहंकारान्न श्रोष्यसि विनङ्क्ष्यसि।।

maccittaḥ sarvadurgāni matprasādāt tariṣyasi
atha cet tvamahamkārāt na śrosyasi vinankṣyasi

Wilkins had rendered it thus:[16]

> (With thy heart place all thy works on me; prefer me to all things else; depend upon the use of thy understanding, and think constantly of me;) for by doing so thou shalt, by my divine favour, surmount every difficulty which surroundeth thee. But if, through pride, thou wilt not listen unto my words, thou shalt undoubtedly be lost.

In the rendering given here, the words within brackets are the purport of what the preceding verse says and the words of the bracket are what the verse under discussion conveys. If we regard Blake's 'Art' as the equivalent of the divine fellowship of which the *Gītā* speaks, there is no essential difference between the passage from *A Vision of the Last Judgment* and the verse of the *Gītā* cited here. Raphael, Michael Angelo and the ancient sculptors are the examples of devout souls who were granted divine fellowship owing to their total dedication to their Art, their God. On the other hand, the worldlings, whom Blake calls 'Venetian Painters', are bound to be lost in the world of generation and death—the *samsāra* of Hindu philosophy, with its endless chain of birth, death and rebirth. In fact, *Gītā*'s *karma-yoga* which guarantees divine fellowship, implies total dedication to Art in respect of painters.

9. Blake is very close to the Hindus so far as his world-view is concerned. Philosophically speaking, his attitude to the world is that of a Vedantist, pure and simple. I quote below Professor Berger's summary of Blake's attitude to the world, collected from a careful study of the writings of the English mystic:[17]

> For him (i.e. Blake) even more than any other idealist, the world has no real and independent existence: it is only a mode of the human spirit, spontaneously produced, without external cause, subsisting entirely in itself. Nothing exists except the spirit: the actual world is a dream.

In support of his thesis regarding Blake's world-view, Berger quotes the following passage from the poet's *A Vision of the Last Judgment*:[18]

> Mental things alone are real. What is called corporal, nobody knows of. Its dwelling place is fallacy and its existence an imposture. What is the existence, out of mind, of thought? Where is it but in the mind of a fool?

Blake's thinking matches the thinking of the *Gītā*, expressed in the sixteenth and seventeenth verse of its second chapter:

नासतो विद्यते भावो नाभावो विद्यते सतः।
उभयोरपि दृष्टोन्तस्त्वनयोस्तत्त्वदर्शिभिः।।
अविनाशि तु तद्विद्धि येन सर्वमिदं ततम्।
विनाशमव्ययस्यास्य न कश्चित्कर्तुमर्हति।।

nāsato vidyate bhāvo nābhāvo vidyate sataḥ
ubhayorapi dṛaṣtontas tvanayos tattvadarśibhiḥ.
avinaśi tu tad viddhi yena sarvamidaṁ tatam
vināśam avyayasyāsya na kascit kartumarhati.

Wilkins had rendered these 2 verses in the following words:[19]

> A thing imaginary hath no existence, whilst that which is true, is a stranger to non-entity. By those who look into the principles of things, the design of each is seen. Learn that he by whom all things were formed is incorruptible, and that no one is able to effect the destruction of this thing which is inexhaustible.

Here, Lord Krishna is enlightening Arjuna on the unsubstantiality of the world represented by the body and on the ultimate reality and immortality of the soul. Verse seventeen clearly maintains that the world was created by the spirit and it has its being in the spirit. This is precisely the position of Blake: 'Mental things alone are real' or as Berger puts it: 'Nothing exists except the spirit: the actual world is a dream.' This is the well-known doctrine of the Advaita Vedānta school of Indian philosophy, summed up in the famous sutra of Shankarāchārya:
(*'Brahma satyam, Jaganmithya'*).

10. Blake seems to have been deeply impressed by the 'Vishvaroopdarshana' of the eleventh chapter of the *Gītā* where Lord Krishna reveals to Arjuna his Universal Form. This motif of the Hindu text is clearly at the back of one of the illustrations by Blake himself to his *Jerusalem* which shows Albion's vast body to be bearing upon it the whole

universe—the sun, the moon and the stars which were to separate themselves after the creation from the mighty limbs of Albion. Blake comments in the 'Preface' to Chapter II of the poem where the illustration under discussion is given:

> All things Begin and End in Albion's Ancient
> Druid Rocky Shore.

This vision of Albion is undoubtedly modelled on the Universal Form of Lord Krishna given in the *Gītā* (Chapter XI). The thirteenth verse of the chapter seems to be the chief source of Blake's vision:

> तत्रैकस्थं जगत्कृत्स्नं प्रविभक्तमनेकधा।
> अपश्यद्देवदेवस्य शरीरे पाण्डवस्तदा।।
>
> *tatraikastham jagatkṛtsnam pravibhaktam anekadhā*
> *apaśyat devadevasya śarīre paṇḍavastadā.*

In Wilkins's translation the verse reads:[20]

> The son of Pandoo then beheld within the body of God of Gods, standing together, the whole universe divided forth into its vast variety.

The above verse of the *Gītā* is followed by a long description of the cosmic form of Krishna, subsuming all things of the universe, including the sun, the moon and the stars and everything else. The description occupies Verses 15–30.

11. The mystic Blake presumably had a great fascination for the north-south symbolism given in Verses 24-25 of the eighth chapter of the *Gītā*. Here, the northern gate has been called 'Devayāna' or the path leading to the abode of the gods and the southern gate has been called 'Pitṛyāna' or the path leading to the world of the manes. According to the *Gītā*, those whose souls after death pass through the northern gate have not to return to the earth any more whereas the souls that pass through the southern gate have to return to the earth after spending some years of bliss in the world of the manes (i.e. 'Pitṛloka'). In Plate VI Section IV, Blake uses the north–south symbolism of the *Gītā* but reverses the order. In

his poem the northern gate is for men and the southern gate has been suggestively reserved for the gods. *Odyssey XIII, The Faerie Queene III.VI.31-33* and *Phaedrus, 248* have been suggested by various scholars as Blake's source but the *Gītā* appears to be the true source of Blake for the mystical vision of his poem, it being the most mystical of poems in its own right.

12. *Bhagavad-Gītā* is best known for its doctrine of Metempsychosis or reincarnation. The doctrine is of Indian origin though other cultures, too, seem to subscribe to it. In the second chapter of the *Gītā*, Lord Krishna expounds it at length to Arjuna with a view to allaying the fears of the latter regarding the deaths of his near and dear ones in the war; this the Lord does in Verses 11–30. Blake, it appears to me, learnt the doctrine with renewed interest and vigour from the Indian text, though in all probability he had read of it in the works of the Kabalists and Gnostics. In any case, he believed in the doctrine from the very core of his heart and lived by its faith. The following extract from a letter of the poet to his friend John Flaxman, the sculptor, is a clear proof of it:[21]

> In my brain are studies and chambers filled with books and pictures of old, which I wrote and painted in ages of eternity before my mortal life; and these works are the delight and study of archangels.... You, O dear Flaxman, are a sublime archangel, my friend and companion from eternity. I look back into the regions of reminiscence, and behold our ancient days before this earth appeared and its vegetative mortality to my mortal vegetated eyes. I see our houses of eternity which can never be separated, though our mortal vehicles should stand at the remotest corners of heaven from each other.

The readers of the *Gītā* will not fail to recall on reading the above statement of Blake the verse in which Lord Krishna tells Arjuna that the *yoga*-doctrine He had explained to Vivasvān (i.e. the sun) at the beginning of the Creation and the latter in his turn had expounded it to Manu. At this,

Arjuna gets curious as to how this could be possible; then the Lord says:

बहूनि मे व्यतीतानि जन्मानि तव चार्जुन।
तान्यहं वेद सर्वाणि न त्वं वेत्थ परंतप।।

bahūni me vyatītāni janmāni tava cārjuna
tānyaham veda sarvāṇi na tvaṁ vetth parantapa.
Chapter IV.V

Wilkins rendered this verse thus:[22]

> Both I and thou have passed many births. Mine are known unto me; but thou knowest not of thine.

Blake shared with the Hindus the belief that there is a long chain of births and rebirths crossing which the soul will achieve eternal bliss. This is quite clear from the following extract from *Vala, or The Four Zoas* (Night the Eighth):

> ...(Man) stores his thoughts
> As in a store house in his memory. He regulates the forms
> Of all beneath and all above...he rises to the Sun,
> And to the Planets of the Night, and to the stars that gild
> The Zodiacs, and the stars that sullen stand to north and south
> He touches the remotest pole, and in the centre weeps
> That Man should labour and sorrow, and learn and forget, and return
> To the dark valley whence he came, and begin his labour anew.

The adverb 'anew' at the end of the above quotation leaves us in no doubt regarding the idea expressed in it; it is clearly about the cycle of births and deaths—(Hindus have counted these to be 84,00,000). In the eighth line of the extract, Blake has used an expression which leads us to conclude that he had derived his thought from the Hindu text; the expression concerned is 'to the dark valley whence he came'; this clearly refers to the concept of the 'Avyakta' which is Upanishadic

in origin and occurs in the *Gītā* VIII.18. The verse runs as follows:

अव्यक्ताद् व्यक्तयः सर्वाः प्रभवन्त्यहरागमे।
रात्र्यागमे प्रलीयन्ते तत्रैवाव्यक्तसंज्ञके।।

ayaktād vyaktayah sarvāḥ prabhavanty aharāgame
rātryāgame pralīyante tatraivāvyaktasaṁjnake.

Wilkins's version of the verse reads as follows:[23]

> On the coming of that day, all things proceed from invisibility to visibility; so, on the approach of night, they are dissolved away in that which is called invisible.

Gītā's 'Invisible' has assumed the form of 'dark valley' in the poem of Blake and, as a matter of fact, the whole of the extract from the 'Vala' is a poetic elaboration of the nineteenth verse of the eighth chapter of the *Gītā*:

भूतग्रामः स एवायं भूत्वा भूत्वा प्रलीयते।
रात्र्यागमेऽवशः पार्थ प्रभवत्यहरागमे।।

bhūtagrāmaḥ sa evāyaṁ bhūtvā bhūtvā pralīyate
rātryāgame'vaśaḥ pārtha prabhavaty aharāgame.

> ('The universe, even having existed, is again dissolved; and now again, on the approach of day, by divine necessity, it is reproduced.') Wilkins, p. 75.

The word that Wilkins has rendered by the English word 'universe' is *bhūtagrāma*, meaning the totality of beings. According to *Gītā* and several philosophical systems, all beings proceed from the primordial energy called 'Avyakta' and they return to it when the entire creation is dissolved; in between creation and dissolution these beings pass through a chain of births and deaths not only on this earth but on other planets also. Blake may have got this idea also from sources other than the *Gītā* such as the writings of William Jones and other Orientalists. He has made a very poetic use of it in his visionary poems.

13. Blake's well-known opposition to the curbing of passions as a means to God-realization has its sanction in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. He asserts in *A Vision of the Last Judgment*:

Men are admitted into Heaven not because they have curbed and governed their passions or have no passions, but because they have Cultivated their understanding. The Treasures of Heaven are not Negations of Passions but Realities of Intellect, from which all the Passions emanated uncurbed in their Eternal Glory. The Fool shall not enter into Heaven let him be ever so Holy. Holiness is not the price of Entrance into Heaven. Those who cast out are All Those who, having no Passions of their own because no intellect, Have spent their lives in Curbing and Governing other people's by the Various arts of Poverty and Cruelty of all kinds. Wo, Wo, Wo! to you Hypocrites! Even Murder the Courts of Justice, more merciful than the Church, are compelled to allow is not done in Passion, but in cool Blooded design and intention.

The modern Church crucifies Christ with the Head Downwards.

This is clearly a diatribe against religious hypocrisy and pretensions of virtue. Its purport is that God-realization comes not from curbing the passions but rather from giving them a true direction towards God. The *Gītā*, too, it must be remembered, affirms that the seeker after God should try to master the Lower Self by the Higher Self. The Lower Self consisting of Passions and Desires, has not to be destroyed; it should rather be used as a helper by means of a spiritual orientation. The Hindu text talks about the adoption of a Middle Path—the path of moderation and harmonization. The sixteenth and seventeenth verses of the sixth chapter of the *Gītā* support the thesis of Blake:

नात्यश्नतस्तु योगोऽस्ति न चैकान्तमनश्नतः।
न चातिस्वप्नशीलस्य जाग्रतो नैव चार्जुन।।
युक्ताहारविहारस्य युक्तचेष्टस्य कर्मसु।
युक्तस्वप्नावबोधस्य योगो भवति दुःखहा।।

nātyaśnatastu yogo'sti na caikāntamanaśnataḥ
na cāti svapnaśīlasya jāgrato naiva cārjuna.

yuktāhārvihārasya yuktaceṣṭasya karmasu
yuktasvapnāvabodhasya yogo bhavati duḥkhahā.

Wilkins did these verses into English in the following way:[24]

> This divine discipline, Arjoon, is not to be attained by him who eateth more than enough, or less than enough; neither by him who hath a habit of sleeping much, nor by him who sleepeth not at all. The discipline which destroyeth pain belongeth to him who is moderate in eating and in recreation, whose inclinations are moderate in action, and who is moderate in sleep.

Clearly, the Hindu text is talking about the cultivation of an understanding regarding leading a good life on the earth. It does not advocate repression of passions; instead, it lays stress on the training of passions and emotions. The most authoritative verse relevant to the subject is Verse 70 of the second chapter which runs thus:

आपूर्यमाणमचलप्रतिष्ठं
समुद्रमापः प्रविशन्ति यद्वत्।
तद्वत्कामा यं प्रविशन्ति सर्वे
स शान्तिमाप्नोति न कामकामी।।

āpūryāmaṇam acalapratiṣṭham
samudramāpaṭh praviśanti yadvat
tadvat kamā yaṁ praviśanti sarve
sa śāntim āpnoti na kāmakāmi.

Wilkins's rendering of the verse is as follows:[25]

> The man whose passions enter his heart as waters run into the unswelling passive ocean, obtaineth happiness; not he who lusteth in his lusts.

Here, there is a clear suggestion of a spiritual orientation of passions rather than the denial or repressions of passions. The idea of passions emanating uncurbed in their glory has been conveyed very vividly by the image of rivers entering a passive and placid ocean. Just as Blake talks about 'Realities of Intellect', the *Gītā* too, lays emphasis on the 'Realities of

Intellect'. for the purpose of God-realization. The twenty-first verse of the sixth chapter is very clear on this point:

सुखमात्यन्तिकं यत्तद्बुद्धिग्राह्यमतीन्द्रियम्।
वेत्ति यत्र न चैवायं स्थितश्चलति तत्त्वतः।।

sukham ātyantikam yattad buddhigrahyam atīndriyam
vetti yatra na caivayam sthitas calati tattvataḥ.

The expression 'बुद्धिग्राह्यम्' (*buddhigrāhyam*) implies not the negation of the passions but of their intelligent utilization. In VI.25 the Hindu text uses the expression बुध्द्या धृतिगृहीतया (*buddhyā dhṛtigṛhītayā*) which means 'through patient intellect'. Evidently, the text stresses the importance of intelligence in bringing passions to rest; it is in favour of self-possession and not of the repression of the passions. Moreover, just as Blake attacks the 'Hypocrites', the *Gītā* also takes the hypocrites to task in the sixth verse of its third chapter:

कर्मेन्द्रियाणि संयम्य य आस्ते मनसा स्मरन्।
इन्द्रियार्थान्विमूढात्मा मिथ्याचारः स उच्यते।।

karmendriyāṇi saṁyamya ya āste manasā smaran
indriyārthān vimūḍhātmā mithyācāraḥ sa ucyate.

Wilkins had rendered this verse in the following words:[26]

> The men who restraineth his active faculties, and sitteth down with his mind attentive to the objects of his senses, is called one of an astrayed soul, and the practiser of deceit.

Moreover, quite like Blake who is against the practice of the arts of poverty and cruelty, the *Gītā* condemns the harsh penances and indulgence in self-denials of all kinds. In the fifth and sixth verses of the seventeenth chapter it deals a severe blow to the practitioners of such deeds:

अशास्त्रविहितं घोरं तप्यन्ते ये तपो जनाः।
दम्भाहंकारसंयुक्ताः कामरागबलान्विताः।।
कर्षयन्तः शरीरस्थं भूतग्राममचेतसः।
मां चैवान्तःशरीरस्थं तान्विद्ध्यासुरनिश्चयान्।।

aśāstravihitaṁ ghoraṁ tapyante ye tapojanāḥ
dambhāhankārasaṁyuktāḥ kāmarāgabalānvitāḥ.

karṣayantaḥ śarīrastham bhūtagrāmam acetasaḥ
mām caivāntaḥśarīrastham tān viddhy āsuraniścayān.

Wilkins did the rendering of these verses in the following manner:[27]

> Those men who perform severe mortifications of the flesh, not authorised by the sastra, are possessed of hypocrisy and pride, and overwhelmed with lust, passion, and tyrannic strength. These fools torment the spirit that is in the body, and myself also who am in them. Know what are the resolutions of those who are born under the influence of the evil spirit.

Not only in thought but also in phraseology does the passage from *A Vision of the Last Judgment* resemble the passage from *Gītā*'s English translation by Wilkins that Blake had read. Naturally, the logical conclusion is that the English poet had formulated his theory on the basis of the Hindu text, or at least, had felt strengthened in asserting his point of view by the highly reputed scripture of a country whose philosophical speculations had captivated the hearts of enlightened people of the entire world down the ages.

Notes and References

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12. Charles Wilkins, *Bhagavatgeeta*, op. cit., p. 70.
13. Ibid., p. 133.
14. Robert Ernest Hume, translated *The Thirteen Principal Upaniṣads translated from the Sanskrit with an outline of the Philosophy of the Upanishads*, Oxford University Press, first published 1921:362 second revised edition, 1931.
15. Sir William Jones, translation of *Īsāvāsyam, or an Upanishad from the Yajurveda*, available in the 13th volume of *Works of Sir William Jones*, edited by Lord Teignmouth, 13 vols, London, 1807, p. 3.
16. Charles Wilkins, *Bhagavatgeeta*, op. cit., p. 132.
17. P. Berger, *William Blake: Poet and Mystic*, op. cit., p. 80.
18. Ibid., p. 80, quoted from 'Picture of the Last Judgment'.
19. Wilkins, *Bhagavatgeeta*, op. cit., p. 36.
20. Ibid., p. 90.
21. William Blake's letter to John Flaxation, the Sculptor; vide William Scoones, *English Letters*, London, 1880, p. 361.
22. Charles Wilkins, *Bhagavad-Geeta*, op. cit., p. 51.
23. Ibid., p. 75.
24. Ibid., p. 64.
25. Ibid., p. 43.
26. Ibid., p. 45.
27. Ibid., p. 120.

A New Look at Wordsworth's 'Immortality Ode': A Hindu View

In all probability the poem known as the 'Immortality Ode' is the best poem of William Wordsworth. In any event, it is the most popular of the poems by which the English poet is known to us. Professor G. Wilson Knight called it 'Wordsworth's most finally satisfying human work'.[1] However, the poem has caused a great deal of controversy in regard to its meaning. Notwithstanding the learned commentaries by C.M. Bowra, Lionel Trilling, H.W. Garrod, Arthur Beatty, G. Wilson Knight, John K. Mathison, Thomas M. Raysor, Robert L. Schneider, Alan Grob and, of course, Cleanth Brooks,[2] there remain many a dark spot in the 'Ode' to be illuminated. Some of these spots are: (1) What is the significance of specifying a particular tree in line 51 and of 'a single Field' in line 52 (both in Stanza IV)? (2) What does the expression 'trailing glory' mean in line 6 (Stanza V). (3) What does Wordsworth really mean by the first 4 lines of Stanza IX? (4) What is the distinction between 'nature' and 'mortal Nature' in lines 135 and 150, respectively (both in Stanza IX)? (5) Who are the 'Children' referred to in line 170 (Stanza IX)? and (6) Why did the poet delete many lines and passages of the original poem, (especially the following lines from the version of the poem available to us), which are a great loss for the true lovers of poetry?:

> To whom the grave
> Is but a lonely bed without the sense or sight
> Of day or the warm light

A place of thought where we in waiting lie.

These lines were an integral part of Stanza VIII where they followed the line 'A Presence which is not to be put by'.

I think that we can easily and competently explicate all the dark passages of the poem in the light of Indian philosophy because I have enough evidence to prove that the great 'Ode' had been written under the influence of the Indian philosophy as enshrined in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* which Wordsworth had read quite thoroughly in its English prose rendering by (Sir) Charles Wilkins, published in London in 1785 under the aegis of the British East India Company at the recommendation of Warren Hastings, the first Governor-General of British India. It must be placed on record that the Hindu scripture had been hailed very enthusiastically by the entire Western world in general and by Great Britain in particular when it appeared in a European language as has been very candidly admitted by Mr Schweitzer.[3] The fact is corroborated by the large number of articles, glorifying the ethical thought of the work, that kept appearing in the popular magazines of the day in London and elsewhere in the last decade of the eighteenth century when Wordsworth had launched his literary career. Two magazines are of special relevance here; they are *The British Critic* and *The Monthly Magazine* which printed very favourable comments on the work.[4] It must be noted that Wordsworth used to subscribe and contribute to these magazines; he could not have missed the reviews of the Sanskrit text appearing in them. Another confirmation of Schweitzer's admission comes from the fact that the *Bhagavad-Gītā* in Wilkins's English prose version was read and enjoyed by all the early Romantic poets. William Blake was so impressed by the book that he felt inspired to make a drawing of the translator, Charles Wilkins, entitling his drawing 'The Brahmins'; in this drawing he portrayed Wilkins as an Indian Brahmin, engaged in his work of translation. This was item X of his *Descriptive Catalogue*. Southey mentions and quotes from the *Gītā* in the 'Preface' to his *Curse of Kehama* and uses 6 specific ideas of the scripture

in the body of the text of his Indian epic, acknowledging the *Gītā* as the source of those ideas in his 'Notes' to the poem. And Coleridge quotes a very long passage from the eleventh chapter of the *Gītā* called 'Vishvaroopadarshana' or 'the Vision of the Cosmic Form'.[5] Now, it is an established fact that Coleridge and Southey were very close to Wordsworth and the 3 friends along with Wordsworth's sister Dorothy used to discuss with one another the thoughts and ideas that each had gathered from his or her readings, especially the latest readings. From this very fact it becomes more than probable that Coleridge and Southey had discussed the thoughts of the Hindu scripture at great length with Wordsworth. In any event, Wordsworth seems to have imbibed the thoughts of the *Gītā* very deeply for he puts those thoughts to much better use in his poetry than Coleridge or Southey. Those who assert that Wordsworth was a thoroughly original poet who did not care for books, are clearly in the wrong because books numbering several thousands were catalogued and auctioned from his personal library and the Wordsworth Society had published the entire list of the books in an article of about one hundred pages in its chief organ called *Journal of Wordsworth Studies* in 1884.[6] Although I am yet to come across a clear reference to the *Gītā* in the writings of the poet so far as I know them, I suspect that his sonnet on the translation of the Bible is actually on the English translation of the 'Hindu Bible' as the *Gītā* was called in the scholarly circles of Europe of the day. Since there had been no new translation of the Bible in Wordsworth's own day to occasion the composition of the sonnet and since the Hindu Bible had appeared during Wordsworth's boyhood, I feel justified in affirming that the actual subject of the sonnet is the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. Let me be permitted to quote the full text of the sonnet for the sake of the lay readers to whom the sonnet may not be easily available:[7]

> But, to outweigh all harm, the sacred Book,
> In dusty sequestration wrapt too long,
> *Assumes the accents of our native tongue*;

And he who guides the plough, or wields the crook,
With understanding spirit now may look
Upon her records, listen to her song,
And sift her laws—much wondering that the wrong,
Which Faith has suffered, Heaven could calmly brook,
Transcendent Boon! noblest that earthly King
Ever bestowed to equalize and bless
Under the weight of mortal wretchedness!
But passions spread like plagues, and thousands wild
With bigotry shall tread the Offering
Beneath their feet, detested and defiled.
(emphasis added)

The honest and objective readers of this book will, I hope, pay a serious thought to the third line of the sonnet which I have highlighted, namely, 'Assumes the accents of our native tongue'. The use of the present tense and the employment of the expression 'accents of our native tongue' suggest the immediacy of appeal inherent in the composition of the English translation of the Hindu Bible in the year 1785 which had remained for long the monopoly of the learned Brahmins, not prepared to reveal the doctrines of the scripture to the common man. The expression 'Transcendent Boon', used in the ninth line of the sonnet, is a very apt tribute which could be paid both to the *Gītā* and the Bible alike but with a more telling effect to the former. The word 'song', used at the end of the sixth line of the poem, I think, clinches the matter; the epithet is richly deserved by the *Gītā* rather than by the Bible—Edwin Arnold had correctly called the *Gītā* the 'Song Celestial'.[8]

That Wordsworth was deeply interested in India and her culture becomes evident from a look at Lane Cooper's *Concordance*[9] to the poetical works of the poet; it contains nearly one hundred references to India, India's, Indian, Hindu, Ganges, Bombay, East, Eastern, Oriental, Rajput, Raja, Maharaja and Bengal. He had a direct link with India through his brother John Wordsworth who was in the employment of the British East India Company and had stayed in

India for several years.[10] Worsworth himself had been intended by his gurdian uncles for a good job in India;[11] with this aim in view he had offered a course of Oriental languages during his stay at Cambridge University.[12] Some books of Arabic learning in his personal library show that he had started learning Arabic.[13] We do not know whether he had picked up some bits of the Sanskrit language but then his knowledge of Indian philosophy and religion was quite deep. That he knew Hindu mythology to a considerable extent is clear from his reference to 'Gangāvataraṇa' or the descent of the Ganges on the earth in the following passage from his *Excursion*:

: then as the Hindus draw
Their holy Ganges from a skyey fount,
Even so deduce the stream of human life
From seats of power divine; and hope, or trust
That our existence winds her stately course
Beneath the sun, like Ganges, to make part
Of a living ocean;

(Book III, 254–60)

The expression 'skyey fount' refers to Brahmā's 'kamandalu' or Vishnu's nails from which the Ganges has been represented by the Purāṇas and epics like Valmiki's *Rāmāyaṇa* as deriving her origin divine. About a dozen lines or so after the passage given here, Wordsworth makes use of some concepts of the Upanishads, particularly of *Māndūkyopaniṣad* which he may have read in the Latin translation of Du Perron's *Oupanikhat* which had appeared in 2 volumes in 1801–02. I quote the passage:

; no to me, who find,
Reviewing my past way, much to condemn,
Little to praise, and nothing to regret,
(Save some remembrance of dreak-like joys
That scarcely seem to have belonged to me.)
If I must take my choice between the pair
That rule alternately the weary hours,

Night is than day more acceptable; Sleep
Doth, in my estimate of good, appear
A better state than waking; death than sleep:
The Excursion III.270–79

(emphasis added)

The italicized portion of the above extract is clearly based on the 4 aspects of consciousness—waking (*jāgṛti*), sleep (*suṣupti*), dream (*svapna*) and death (*turīya* or fourth) as described in *Māndūkyopaniṣad*[14] where the 4 states of consciousness have been placed in ascending order thus: waking, dream, sleep and fourth or *turīya* which is akin to death. Wordsworth may have found this Upanishadic thought in Duperron's Latin translation, as, I think, was probably the case, for the French missionary's work had created a great stir in the scholarly circles of the West and our poet knew enough Latin to be able to grasp the Latin rendering of Duperron. Other probable sources for the Upaniṣadic thoughts used by Wordsworth were Nathaniel Halhed's *Gentoo Laws* (1774) [Halhed mentions on p. XXXV of his work (in a footnote in the 'Preface'): 'Three Modes of Being—To be awake, to sleep, and to be absorbed in a state of unconsciousness—a kind of Trance.'] and an article in the 1782 volume of the *Annual Register*,[15] dealing with the character of the Brahmins of India. Whatever the source, the fact remains that our poet had a deep appreciation of Indian thoughts and had no inhibitions whatever in making a poetic use of them. Indeed, he was ready to embrace the creed of the Pagons as he declared very eloquently in his famous sonnet 'The World is Too Much With Us' (1802):

—Great God I'd rather be
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;

In this connection Wordsworth's stay in Germany at the end of the eighteenth century should not be ignored at all. It was the time when Germany was full of enthusiasm for Indian wisdom as enshrined in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* and *Abhijnānaśākuntalam* and many other Sanskrit texts that had

been made available to Europe in European languages by the eminent Orientalists of the day such as Sir William Jones, Sir Charles Wilkins and Georg Forster. The literary luminaries of Germany of the day such as Goethe, Herder and the Schlegel brothers, became enthralled by the Indian texts. As everybody knows, Goethe had waxed lyrical when he read Kālidāsa's *Shakuntalā* in the German prose of Georg Forster, done from the English version of Jones, as early as 1791. The English translation of Goethe's German eulogy on the Indian play runs as follows:

> Wouldst thou the young years blossom and the fruit of its decline,
> And all by which the soul is charmed, enraptured, feasted, fed,
> Wouldst thou the Earth and Heaven itself in one solemn name combine,
> I name thee, O Śakuntala! and all at once is said.

Goethe had his German eulogy printed in the *Deutsch Monatsschrift* (German Monthly Journal, 1791) and in the following year Herder set it at the head of his article 'On the Eastern Drama'. In 1798, Herder wrote:[16] 'Since Sakontala is unfortunately still the only example of her (India's) perfected culture, one lingers with pleasure over it. We must have more Sakontalas in the near future, for they are the finest contributions to the cultural history of the peoples.' The Schlegel brothers were equally impressed with the Sanskrit play. Thus, needless to say, Germany was aglow with an intense love for Indian literature and philosophy. Wordsworth must have felt the impact of this German craze for Indian things. No wonder, he felt inspired to study the Sanskrit texts that were available to him in Germany as well as in his native country.

Buttressed with the argument regarding Wordsworth's interest in India and her culture, presented here, I would like to put forward a Hindu interpretation of the 'Immortality Ode' because I believe that it was written under the influence of Indian philosophy as presented in the *Gītā* of Wilkins's

English rendering and in the Upanishads of Duperron's Latin version plus earlier preliminary work in the field done by scholars like Alexander Dow and Nathaniel Halhed, and even the notes of John Marshall, sent from India to the Cambridge Platonist Henry More.[17] But before the Hindu interpretation of the 'Ode' could be provided, it would be better for us to be very clear about the drift of thought of the poem.

The 'Ode' is divided into 11 stanzas of unequal lengths but then it has 5 clear-cut movements. Stanzas I–IV constitute the psychological background against which the poet's thesis regarding the immortality of the soul—the central and pivotal philosophy—has been developed; to use a term of the *Gītā*, the stanzas concerned contain 'Viṣāda-yoga', delineating the poet's despondency in the midst of joyous sights of May-day and his inability to join in this festivity. Stanza V accounts for the loss of his capacity to derive joy from the objects of Nature by implying that it is his gradual involvement in the affairs of the world which has taken away the visionary gleam from his sight. Wordsworth explains his position in terms of the doctrine of the soul's pre-existence, according to which the soul remained in the vicinity of the source of the 'visionary gleam' (i.e. God) before it assumed a body in the present birth. The gradual disappearance of the 'visionary gleam', the poet purports to state, is the result of the child's getting removed from the divine element with which its soul was associated at the time of its birth; as the child gets older and older in age, it gets involved in the activities of the world in its capacity as a Man as opposed to its capacity as a Child, pure and innocent, and therefore divine; the result is that the 'vision splendid' with which the child had been born gradually fails him/her until it finally fades into the light of common day. In the terminology of the *Gītā*, Stanza V can be termed as the 'Ode's Sāṁkhyayoga' (i.e. its discourse on knowledge divine).

The third movement of the poem is available in the sixth and seventh stanzas. The *Gītā* could have called them '*Māyā-yoga*' (i.e. a discourse on Matter or Māyā in the form of the

Earth); the Hindu scripture, in point of fact, prefers calling this kind of discussion '*Guṇa-traya-Vibhāga-Yoga*' or a discourse on the 3 modes of Nature or *prakṛti*. Stanza VI provides an elaborate account of the role of the Earth in making the child born with heavenly light forget and forsake that light in favour of the pleasures of the senses with which she surrounds it. Stanza VII develops further the thought of the growing mundaneness of the child under the impact of the Earth by providing a graphic picture of a 6 year-old one, lost in the newborn blisses, gifted by the Earth, as opposed to the heavenly blisses that it had experienced while it was in the presence of God before assuming its birth on this globe. The newborn blisses take the form of the 'sallies of his mother's kisses' and of 'the light upon him from his father's eyes' as also of the various roles of worldly creatures that it imitates, filling his 'humorous stage' with the persons of all hues and shapes down to palsied age.

The fourth movement of the 'Ode' has been provided in Stanza VIII which pays a rich tribute to the child, not yet corrupted by the 'equipage' of Life. In fact, it is a tribute to the immensity of the child's soul. In the idiom of the *Gītā* the stanza could be called '*Purushottamayoga*' or 'Discourse about the best person that a pure child definitely is.' It is evident that the loss of glory and 'the freshness of a dream' that the poet bewailed in Stanzas I–IV are the 'truths' that rest on the innocent child but belie the grown-up man. These truths are to be further equated with the immortality that broods over the child like the day and with 'A Presence which is not to be put by.' The 'truths' are further explained in terms of the glorious might of the heaven-born freedom resting on the height of the child's being. At the end of the stanza, the poet suggests that the immortality of the child's soul is unfortunately supplanted in due course of time by the soul's 'earthly freight' with the result that the poor child is burdened with the customs of the world. The suggested thought is that the child can retain its inborn heavenly glory by refusing to be enslaved by the humdrum world.

In Stanza IX which, I think, is the crux of the poem, we find intimations of immortality from the recollections of early childhood. In the parlance of the *Gītā* we can call this movement of the 'Ode' 'Brahmavidyāyoga' or 'discourse on the externality and immortality of the soul'. The poet suggests that however fugitive the thought of the soul's had—been association with God and its own immortality might be, it endures even in our old age because 'nature' still remembers those intimations of early childhood when truths of life (i.e. the essentially divine nature of the soul) used to rest on the face of the child. It is remarkable that in the third line of this stanza, Wordsworth has used the word 'nature' not with a capital 'N' but with a small 'n'. Clearly, the word 'nature' here does not mean what is meant by the word 'Nature' in expressions such as 'Wordsworth, the High-Priest of Nature' where 'Nature' stands for a supernatural cosmic power, governing the Universe as an agent of God. Whenever Wordsworth wants to convey this sense of the word, he uses a capital 'N'. In 'Tintern Abbey', for example, the poet uses the word (with a capital 'N') twice in the concluding verse-paragraph. So is the case with the first stanza of 'Education of Nature' or 'Three years She Grew' and with a dozen of other places, including various passages of the *Prelude*. But whenever the poet uses the word 'nature' with a small 'n', he means 'the innate tendency or inclination'. For example, he uses 'nature' with a small 'n' in 'Ode to Duty', line 18, where the word implies 'innate disposition'. In the 'Ode', under discussion, I am sure, (in the third line of Stanza IX), the term 'nature' means 'the inborn mind' rather than the world-governing principle, the agent of God. We shall have occasion to discuss the point further in a short while. Suffice to say here that the stanza clearly asserts the possibility of recapturing the visions of childhood whose loss the poet has mourned in the early part of the poem because those visions are not completely lost; they are actually transformed into very subtle forms which the poet describes as living in our 'embers' and retained in 'nature', i.e. 'inborn mind'. At the

end of the stanza, the poet suggests ways and means for recapturing the lost visions. Meditation, according to the poet, is the easiest and surest method of reviving the visions; the poet calls it 'calm weather' by means of which we can have the benign vision of the 'Immortal sea which brought us hither'.

The next movement of the poem can be designated as '*Jnāna-Karma-yoga*' or a discourse establishing the near relationship and even a kind of identity between *jnāna* or Knowledge and *karma* or Action; this is available in Stanza X of the 'Ode'. In this movement the poet's *viṣada* or sorrow disappears, giving way to his decision to join the May-daying bands of birds, young lambs and other blessed creatures such as the Earth, the Sun, the Wind, Land and Sea, and even the Shepherd-boy. The poet will join these jolly bands not in action but in thought. Earlier, during his childhood, the poet used to celebrate the advent of May-day through the path of action (i.e. '*Karma-Yoga*') but now he can participate in their festivity through the path of '*Sāṁkhya*' or Knowledge or as the poet says 'in thought'. What though the visionary gleam of his childhood be lost, he still has its counterpart—'primal sympathy'. The visionary gleam used to make him see divine glory pervading the entire universe, in grass as well as flower and it is precisely this very task that 'primal sympathy' performs now by generating in him the faith that looks through death, ignores it completely and overcomes suffering and pain. And this is only another dimension of the immortality of the soul embodied in the 'visionary gleam', through which the poet, when he was a child, used to visualize a radiance permeating the entire universe, 'splendour in the grass' and 'glory in the flower'. The 2 gifts—'visionary gleam' and 'primal sympathy' are thus not poles apart; in point of fact, they are 2 sides of the same coin.

The final movement of the poem is reached in the last and eleventh stanza; in the parlance of the *Gītā*, we can call it '*Moksha-Yoga*' or a discourse on the liberation from all tensions. Here, the poet demonstrates the powers of the philosophical vision, born out of primal sympathy with the rest

of the creation. The poet addresses the objects of external Nature such as fountains, meadows, hills and groves as if these were animated beings and says that he feels their might in the heart of his hearts. True, he cannot live beneath their more habitual sway, but then he can very well see the worth and power of each object of the world whether it be the brooks, a newborn day, the clouds gathering round the setting sun or any other object of Nature. He affirms that he realizes the value of all things—great and small, even of the most insignificant of flowers; he feels for every phenomenon sincerely and honestly. 'Another race hath been, and other palms are won.' Whereas in his childhood he used to be enthralled by the phenomena of Nature, now in his advanced age he derives metaphysical thoughts from the same phenomena. To him who has kept watch o'er man's mortality, death is no terror—it just means the beginning of a new life. The poet purports to state that now he has grown truly wise and takes a large view of every happening by going into its depth. To ordinary people only lovely flowers make any appeal but to the mature mind of the poet, even the meanest, most unseemly and unsightly of flowers such as celandine, when it 'Blows' (i.e. blooms or blossoms forth), gives thoughts that are too deep for tears for not only sorrow but even joy is a source of the deepest of thoughts to the sagacious poet of the 'Ode'.

The above textual and structural analysis of the 'Ode' clearly suggests its true theme which is the vindication of the immortality of the soul through the dramatization of a supposed psychological crisis in the personal life of the poet. I would like to reiterate here that the chief concern of the poet in this ode is not his supposed crisis but the demonstration of the continuity of the soul's existence both before and after its birth in a bodily form on the earth. That the true theme of the poem is what I have just stated becomes amply clear from the Latin epigram given at the verso of the poem's original publication in the 1807 edition of the poet's collected poems, namely, *Paulo Majora Canamus*, i.e. 'Let us sing of

somewhat more exalted things' which is from the opening of Virgil's Fourth *Eclogue*. It must be noted that the epigram to the poem that we usually find today given at the top of the text of the 'Ode' is from the poet's own shorter poem variously entitled 'Rainbow' and 'My Heart Leaps Up' and dates from 1815 when the Latin epigram was replaced by the lines from the poet's own poem. The Latin epigram makes the poet's intention self-evident; he is not going to deal with any private matter of trivial import but rather with something of a very serious significance. And what could be more serious and grave than the quest of happiness and its realization through some spiritual consolation to be derived from immortality and continued existence of the soul, surviving all changes and transformations caused by time, place and circumstance?

Now that the central theme of the 'Ode' has been clearly identified and defined, it would be worthwhile to discuss the ultimate source of the thoughts regarding the pre-existence and numerous births of the soul and the latter's relationship with God and the Earth with all of which the poem deals. According to almost all Western scholars, Wordsworth was indebted to the Greek philosopher Plato for the doctrine concerning the pre-existence of the soul as detailed in *Phaedrus*[18] and *Phaedo*.[19] However, I would like to argue that the actual source not only of the thought concerning the soul's immortality but also of the soul's relationship with God and the Earth and even Nature is preeminently the Hindu text *Bhagavad-Gītā* in Wilkins's English prose translation. In my considered view, the 'Ode' is a Hindu poem, through and through, saturated with Hindu philosophy and mythology.

That Plato is the ultimate source for the thoughts expressed in the 'Ode', especially in Stanza V, can be summarily rejected by the argument that whereas Plato believed in the existence of the soul prior to its birth on the Earth, the Greek philosopher did not tend to subscribe to the theory regarding the soul's various births and deaths that Stanza V of the 'Ode' suggests and which only the Hindu doctrine of

Metempsychosis expounds through the cosmic principle of 'Karma' or 'Action and its inevitable consequence of birth in a suitable body called yoni.' That the stanza concerned subscribes to the Hindu doctrine of Metempsychosis becomes clear when we read its lines 2–4 aright. Let me first quote the lines:

> The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
> Hath had elsewhere its setting,
> And cometh from afar:

The line 'Hath had elsewhere its setting' clearly implies that our Soul after leaving the presence of God travelled quite widely before it ascended to our present body, i.e. it passed through a long chain of births and deaths before coming to our present body. Hindus believe in 84,00,000 of *yonis* or embodied existences. That Wordsworth is really referring here to the Soul's passage through several births becomes abundantly clear from the expression 'trailing clouds of glory' used in line 7 of the stanza where 'trailing' refers to that long passage of several births. All scholars of Wordsworth know that the stanza had become quite controversial in Wordsworth's own lifetime soon after the first appearance of the poem in 1807 and that the poet had to add a long commentary on it later by way of explaining his position to the dogmatic Christians of his country to whom the doctrine propounded in the stanza was obnoxious and wholly unacceptable. In that famous note[20] the poet flatly denied any Platonic influence on the thought of the stanza but he did not deny any Hindu influence and this fact is of very great interest. In support of the view that Wordsworth believed in the Hindu doctrine of Metempsychosis, I quote below a short poem by him which had remained unpublished until 1927 in which year it was sold at Sotheby's on the 15 December.[21] The poem begins as follows:

> Oh, sweet new-comer to the change-ful earth,
> If, as some *darkling seers* have boldly guessed
> Thou hadst a being and a human birth,
> And wert erewhile by human parents blessed,

Long, long before thy present mother pressed
Thee, helpless stranger, to her fostering breast.
(emphasis added)

The lines here have been addressed to an infant and are the clearest statement of the poet's belief in Metempsychosis or rebirth. But of still greater interest, as the italicized expression of the extract indicates, is the fact that Wordsworth attributes the doctrine to the sages of India. I agree that the term 'darkling' used as an adjective here is quite vague since it does not specify the nationality of the seers concerned for the term could apply to Indians, West Indians and Africans alike. But the expression 'boldly guessed' leads me to believe that the poet is here referring to the author of *Bhagavad-Gītā* who propounds the theory of Metempsychosis in the second chapter of the work rather boldly. The most crucial passage of the chapter is Verse 22 which had been made familiar to the West by Mr Halhed who had quoted the original verse in Devanāgarī script along with an English verse translation of the same several years before Wilkins's English prose rendering of the *Gītā* appeared.[22] I have already argued that in all probability Wordsworth was acquainted with Halhed's *Gentoo Laws*; he must have noticed the verse concerned or at least its English verse rendering in that work. I believe that in the second line of the above extract from his poem he is referring to the author of the verse, cited in Halhed's book. He must have found the ideas of the verse reiterated in Wilkins's translation of the *Gītā*[23] and concluded that the authors of the passages were 2 different individuals for Halhed does not specify the authorship of the passage in his work. Wordsworth, therefore, naturally uses plural number in his description of the Indian propounders of the doctrine of Metempsychosis, calling them 'darkling seers'. Now, I will quote the verse in Roman script along with its rendering both by Halhed and Wilkins separately. Halhed's version runs as follows:

As throwing aside his old Habits
A Man puts on others that are new,

So, our Lives quitting the old,
Go to other newer Animals.

Charles Wilkins, in his turn, rendered the same Sanskrit verse into business-like prose in the following words:

> As a man throweth away old garments and putteth on new, even so the soul, having quitted its old mortal frames, entereth into others which are new.

I have no doubt whatsoever that Wordsworth is recalling this passage of the *Gītā* in the composition of his lines, namely 'The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star/Hath elsewhere its setting,/And cometh from afar:'. The Soul which the poet calls our life's Star can set only in the sense of leaving aside its mortal frame and the clause 'And cometh from afar' implies more than one mortal frame that has been put aside. Readers of Wordsworth's poem who are acquainted with the *Gītā* can never fail to detect the influence of the twenty-second verse of the second chapter of the Hindu scripture in the lines just discussed; the original Sanskrit verse can be transliterated thus:

vāsānsi jīrṇāni yathā vihāya,
navāni gṛhṇāti naro'parāṇi
tathā śarīrāṇi vihāya jīrṇany-
anyāni saṁyāti navāni dehī.

It must be placed on record that this verse of the *Gītā* had become very popular with the Romantic poets of England. Southey cites it in Wilkins's translation in a footnote in his *Curse of Kehama*[24] and Shelley seems to have used in one of the Choruses to his poetic drama *Hellas*.[25] Coleridge, too, uses it in his sonnet entitled 'On a Homeward Journey Upon Hearing of the Birth of a Son.'[26] It is, thus, not improbable that Wordsworth also felt fascinated by the verse of the *Gītā* and employed the thoughts underlying it in his supreme ode on the immortality of the Soul. As I observed a little while ago that many impartial and objective readers of Wordsworth, acquainted with the Hindu scripture, have

felt the impact of the latter on the fifth stanza of the great 'Ode'. One such reader was W.L. Wilmshurst who candidly remarked:[27]

> These two fundamental doctrines, (i.e. Re-Birth and Karma), then, are essential to the understanding of any Eastern religious work; and they do not square with Christian thought as at present expressed, and though I am not concerned here either to defend or to refute them, the warning may be given that he is an unwise man, however ardent may be his own Christian faith, who ridicules or dismisses as improbable, unthinkable or immoral, beliefs which are the result of the matured judgment of the most gifted, perspicacious, and withal, most profoundly devout philosophical thinkers upon the great problems of God and of human life that the world can show. Nor, let it be forgotten that, at the present day, an overgrowing number of Western minds is becoming persuaded, for philosophical reasons, in favour of this teaching which it may be remarked, *underlies Wordsworth's famous ode, On Intimations of Immortality* and which held good with many of the philosophers of the early Christian Church, among whom the great Origen himself was of the opinion that it was more in conformity with reason to believe that every soul is introduced into a body according to its deserts and former action 'rather than to suppose a fresh soul created for every child born into the world.'
>
> (emphasis added)

But the doctrine of Metempsychosis or Re-Birth or Transmigration of the Soul is not the only Hindu element in the texture of Wordsworth's great 'Ode'. Even in the stanza that we have been discussing, namely, Stanza V, there are many other thoughts of the Hindus apart from that of Metempsychosis. The thought underlying the line 'Our Soul that rises with us, our life's Star' is, I maintain, wholly Upanishadic. *Kathopaniṣad* as well as *Bhagavad-Gītā* which claims to be

in the tradition of the Upanishads, clearly maintain that the Soul is without a beginning and without an end—it is neither born nor does it ever die for it is eternal and everlasting. Wordsworth, in a truly Upanishadic spirit, says that our Soul 'rises' with us; he does not say that it is born because he seems to have been in full agreement with the *Gītā* that the Soul '*na jāyate mṛyate vā kadācan*' (i.e. neither takes a birth nor does it die ever); death or birth occurs to our bodies only. But what does the word 'us' mean in the expression 'Our Soul that rises with us'? I believe that 'us' refers to the experiencing souls as distinct from the Universal Soul which Wordsworth calls 'Our Soul'. Here, the poet is recalling the sixth verse of the fourth Adhyāya of *Śvetāśvatara Upanishad* beginning with the words: '*dvā saparṇā sayujā sakhayaḥ*'; in Robert Ernest Hume's English translation the verse reads as follows:[28]

> Two birds, fast-bound companions,
> Clasp close the self-same tree.
> Of these two the one eats sweet fruit;
> The other looks on without eating.

This verse occurs first in the *Ṛgveda* 1.164.20 and then occurs at the outset of the first Khanda of the third Mundaka of the Upanishad called *Mundaka*. The idea underlying it can be found in *Kathopaniṣad* 3.1. in the verse beginning with '*Ṛtaṁ pivantam*' etc.

It must be noted that all the changes and transformations that Wordsworth talks about in the stanza occur to 'us' and not to the 'Soul' which remains throughout an objective, impartial and passive witness to all that happens to 'us'. The various states of 'Boy', 'Youth' and 'Man' belong to 'us' and not to the 'Soul' which remains changeless and without any modifications whatsoever, all the time beholding 'the light and whence it flows'. The pronoun 'He' used in the twelfth line of the stanza and line 69 of the poem is usually taken for the noun 'Boy' of the preceding line but the fact that the poet writes it with a capital 'H' makes it imperative for us to take

it as referring to 'The Soul' of the second line of the stanza. It is the impersonal and universal 'Soul' in us that maintains fellowship and communion with God; the Upanishads call it *ātman*, the representative of Brahman, the Universal Spirit which is eternal, ageless, unchanging, and all-knowing and all-powerful. The individual selves (Wordsworth's 'us') are what the Upanishads call *jīvātmā* which are earth-bound and experiencers of the phenomena of the world, subject to the laws of Nature. Wordsworth maintains, in the true spirit of the Upanishads, that it is the Boy, the Youth and the Man in us which gradually become enveloped by the shades of the prison-house called the Earth. However, the individual selves are not without divinity. They are fragments of the Lord; the last 2 lines of the tenth verse of the fourth Adhyāya of *Śvetāśvtara Upaniṣad* declares:[29]

> This whole world is pervaded
> With beings that are parts of Him.

The *Gītā*, too, subscribes to this view. In the seventh verse of the fifteenth chapter of the scripture, Lord Krishna tells Arjuna in unequivocal terms:

> *Mamaivanśo jīvaloke jīvabhūtaḥ sanatanaḥ*

Wilkins rendered this verse in the following words:[30]

> It is even a portion of myself that in this animal world is the Universal spirit of all things.

The question is as to how this individual self which is a portion of the Lord, the Universal Self, loses its divinity. The *Gītā* says that this loss is due to the individual soul's attachment to the modes of Nature and its gradual distancing from the Lord though the Lord always dwells in its heart (*hṛddeśe*). In Verses 7 and 8 of the ninth chapter of the text, Lord Krishna proclaims:

> *sarvabhūtāni kaunteya prakṛtim yānti māmikām*
> *kalpakṣaye punas tāni kalpādau visṛjamy aham.*

prakṛitim svām avaṣṭabhya visṛjāmi punaḥ-punaḥ
bhūtagrāmam imam kṛtsnam avaśam prakṛter vaśāt.

In Wilkins's prose version these verses read as follows:[31]

> At the end of the period Kalp all things, O son of Koontee, return into my primordial source, and at the beginning of another Kalp I create them all again. I plant myself on my own nature, and create, again and again, this assemblage of beings, the whole, from the power of nature, without power.

Wordsworth seems to have taken the essential idea of the above verses, namely, that the *jivātman* or the individual soul taking its origin from the divine element of God aeons ago, keeps wandering from birth to birth before its present birth, losing its divinity at each new birth. And even in the present birth the little divine glory that is left with it, is at its best during childhood but as the child grows older, the heavenly gleam goes on diminishing until it 'fades into the light of common day.' Wordsworth attributes this loss of child's divinity to the influence of the Earth (vide Stanza 6). Wordsworth's 'Earth' is what the *Gītā* calls *mohinī prakṛti* or *māyā* as distinguished from *daivī prakṛti* which appears in the poetry of the English poet as Nature. Even in the present 'Ode' *Gītā*'s *daivi prakṛti* appears in the expression 'Nature's Priest' (line 73) because here Nature has been associated with the 'East', the symbol of spirituality and divinity whereas the 'Earth' has been described as an agent and instrument of making the child 'forget the glories he hath known' (line 84) exactly as the *Gītā* describes the *mohinī prakṛti* as a means of deluding the individual souls into forgetting the True Reality that is God and worshipping false powers, in the twelfth verse of its ninth chapter. The 'shades of the prison-house' mentioned by Wordsworth at line 69 of the 'Ode' are those of the Earth, the *mohinī prakṛti*, possessing all kinds of snares and temptations, vividly described in Stanza VII. The pervading thought of Stanzas V–VII of the 'Ode' seems to be based on the second passage of the Fourth Prapathaka of *Maitrī*

Upanishad, whose central thesis is fully articulated in a verse which Mr Hume rendered in the following manner:[32]

> Objects of sound and touch and sense
> Are worthless objects in a man.
> Yet, the elemental soul through attachment to them
> Remembers not the highest place.

Verses 9 and 10 of the Fourth Adhyāya of *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* are the other probable sources of Wordsworth's thought; these read as follows in Hume's excellent translation:[33]

> Sacred poetry (chandas), the sacrifices, the ceremonies,
> the ordinances),
> The past, the future, and what the Vedas declare—
> This whole world the illusion-maker (māyin) projects
> out of this (Brahma)
> And in it by illusion (māyā) the other is confined.
> Now, one should know that Nature (Prakṛti) is
> illusion (māyā)
> And that the Mighty Lord (māheshvara) is the illusion-
> maker (māyin).
> This whole world is pervaded
> With beings that are parts of Him,

Nature or *prakṛti* mentioned in the second of the 2 verses cited above must be regarded as *Mohinī prakṛti* or *aparā prakṛti* of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*; this is to be equated with Wordsworth's 'Earth'. But the question is why the poet calls the aim of the Earth 'no unworthy' (line 81). The answer to this question can be given only by the philosophical schools of India. All of these schools subscribe to the view that the ultimate aim of the life of the individual souls on earth is to obtain *mokṣha* or release from the fetters of the cycle of births and deaths called *saṁsāra*. However, this eagerly sought after release cannot be obtained unless the soul undergoes the processes of the world and by overcoming them realizes its identity with the Supreme Soul

lying within. Thus, the Earth by attracting the child to pleasures of her own and thus trying to make the child forget 'that imperial palace whence he came' provides him an opportunity of achieving true knowledge, that is, the knowledge regarding his true identity with Brahma, the Supreme Soul, by overcoming *avidyā* embodied in the Earth, the *mohinī prakṛti*. It is in this sense that the aim of the Earth is not 'unworthy'. And why does the poet describe the yearnings of the Earth for the human child as those of 'her own natural kind' (line 79)? Again, the answer to this can be supplied only by the Upanishads and the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. The fourth and the fifth verse of the seventh chapter of the *Gītā* refer to 2 natures of the Lord: *aparā* and *parā*. The first consists of the world of matter and the second consists of the world of the spirit. Wordsworth's Earth is Gītā's world of matter whereas the individual soul embodied in the child is Gītā's *parā prakṛti* or Spirit-world. Thus, the Earth as well as the Child both are the different forms of God—His lower and higher Natures, related to each other in kind, stock or race. The Earth takes a great deal of care of the Child because the latter is God's *parā prakṛti* and she herself is His *aparā prakṛti*. At line 83 the poet calls the Child first her 'Foster-child' and then 'Inmate Man'. Here too, the poet is deriving his imagery from the Hindu-text which calls the Earth *prakṛti* and the individual soul *purusha* or Person;[34] the terms are ultimately derived from the Sāṁkhya school of Indian philosophy whose most fundamental text called *Sāṁkhya Kārikā* had been made available to the West in an English translation by the English Orientalist Henry Thomas Colebrooke in the year 1803;[35] Wordsworth could have glanced through this great work of India. In any case, the relationship existing between *prakṛti* and *purusha* as described in the *Gītā* seems to be at the back of Wordsworth's description of the association between the

Earth and the Child in the sixth stanza of the great 'Ode'.

Similarly, Wordsworth's glorification of Child and Child-life in the eighth stanza of the 'Ode' which has perplexed the rationalists of the West, can be fully appreciated only if we bear in mind the Upanishadic doctrine that *brahmacharya* (i.e. the innocent life of students) is the source of immortality. One of the hymns of the *Ṛgveda* affirms: '*Brahmacharyeṇa tapasā devaḥ mṛtyum apāghanata*' (i.e. the gods conquered death by means of the chaste life of a student and austerity). But a fuller exposition of *brahmacharya* is to be found in the fifth *Khaṇḍa* of the eighth *prapāthaka* of *Chāndogya Upanishad*. I quote all the 4 passages of the Khanda in the English version of Hume:[36]

> 1. Now, what people call 'sacrifice' (yajna) is really the chaste life of a student of sacred knowledge (brahmacarya), for only through the chaste life of a student of sacred knowledge does he who is a knower (ya jnatr) find that (world).
>
> Now, what people call 'what has been sacrificed' (iṣṭa) is really the chaste life of a student of sacred knowledge, for only after having searched (iṣṭvā) with the chaste life of a student of sacred knowledge does one find the Soul (Ātman).
>
> 2. Now, what people call 'the protracted sacrifice' (sattra-yana) is really the chaste life of a student of sacred knowledge for only through the chaste life of a student of sacred knowledge does one find the protection (trāṇa) of the real (sat) Soul (Ātman).
>
> Now, what people call 'silent asceticism' (mauna) is really the chaste life of a student of sacred knowledge, for only in finding the Soul through the chaste life of a student of sacred knowledge does one (really) think (manute).
>
> 3. Now, what people call 'a course of fasting' (an-

āśakāyana) is really the chaste life of a student of sacred knowledge, for the Soul (Ātman) which one finds through the chaste life of a student of sacred knowledge perishes not (na naśyati).

Now, what people call 'betaking oneself to hermit life in the forest' (araṇyāyana) is really the chaste life of a student of sacred knowledge. Verily, the two seas in the Brahma-world in the third heaven from here, are Ara and Ṇya. There is the lake Airaṁmadīya ('Affording Refreshment and Ecstasy'); there the fig-tree Somasavana ('the Soma-yielding'); there Brahma's citadel, Aparājitā ('the Unconquered'), the golden hall of the Lord (prabhu).

> 4. But only they who find those two seas, Ara and Ṇya, in the Brahma-world through the chaste life of a student of sacred knowledge—only they possess that Brahma-world. In all the worlds they possess unlimited freedom.

I am sure all sensitive and responsive readers will feel that the above passages from the *Chāndogya Upanishad* contain the substance of the eighth stanza of Wordsworth's 'Ode', glorifying the child as 'Mighty prophet, Seer Blest/On whom those truths do rest,/Which we are toiling all over lives to find/In darkness lost, the darkness of the grave.' All the attributes of the child, stated and implied in the stanza, are those of the 'chaste life of a student of sacred knowledge', emphatically proclaimed in the passages cited above.

The greatest proof that the thoughts expressed in the stanza are basically Hindu thoughts is to be found in the fact that some lines of the stanza, available in the original version of the poem, were later deleted; I have already quoted the lines concerned. They were 4 in number and stood between the lines 'A Presence which is not to be put by' and 'Thou little Child, yet glorious

in the might' (i.e. lines 121-22 of the version available to us today). According to Harold Bloom and Lionel Trilling, these 4 lines 'are a loss from the poem.'[37] But the moot question is why the poet had to delete those lines. My view on the issue is that the lines contained inveterately Hindu thoughts regarding the cycle of births and deaths; the poet during his liberal days was quite appreciative of the Hindu doctrine but later during his reactionary and orthodox days felt inclined to appease his narrow-minded Christian public and shallow government by removing the lines smacking of unchristian thoughts. Let us have a look at the lines concerned once more:

> To whom the grave
> Is but a lonely bed without the sense or sight
> Of day or warm light
> *A place of thought where we in waiting lie.*
> (emphasis added)

The thought underlying the lines, and strongly stressed in the last line that I have italicized, is that the Child knows very well that the grave is only a stop-gap arrangement, a place where the *jivātman* has to wait for its assumption of a new bodily form in the next birth. Clearly the thought of the lines is ultimately derived from the verse of the *Gītā*, beginning with the words '*Vāsānsi jīrṇāni yathā vihāya*' that I have already quoted and discussed at great length in the preceding paragraphs of the present paper.

The thoughts expressed in the last 6 lines of the stanza seem to be based on the 8–10 verses of the second *khand* of the first *mundaka* of *Mundakopaniṣad* which read in Hume's English translation as follows:[38]

> Those abiding in the midst of ignorance,
> Self-wise, thinking themselves learned,
> Hard-smitten, go around deluded,
> Like blind men led by one who is himself blind.

Manifoldly living in ignorance,
They think to themselves, childishly: 'We have
accomplished our aim'
Since doers of deeds (karmin) do not understand,
because of passion (rāga),
Therefore, when their worlds are exhausted, they
sink down wretched.

Thinking sacrifice and merit is the chiefest thing,
Naught better do they know—deluded
Having had enjoyment on the top of the heaven
won by good works,
They re-enter this world, or a lower.

Readers should not mistake my intentions here: I do not imply that Wordsworth has lifted the passages from the Upanishad bodily; the poet has made a highly creative use of the thought of the Hindu text in an idiom comprehensible to his readers. The English poet may have found the source of the thoughts of the lines of the eighth stanza, under discussion, also in the second verse of the Fourth Valli of *Kathopanisad* which reads as follows:[39]

The childish go after outward pleasures;
They walk into the net of widespread death.
But the wise, knowing immortality,
Seek not the stable among things which are
unstable here.

Juxtapose this passage from the *Kathopaniṣad* to the lines from Wordsworth's poem, quoted below and see if the underlying thoughts of the 2 texts are not parallel to each other:

Why with such earnest pains dost thou provoke
The years to bring the inevitable yoke
Thus blindly with thy blessedness at strife?
Full soon thy Soul shall have her earthly freight,

And custom lie upon thee with a weight,
Heavy as frost, and deep almost as life.

To those who might view my suggestion as prepostrous should not forget that 50 of the great Upanishad, rendered into the Persian language, under the supervision of Dara Shikoh, the elder brother of the Moghul Emperor Aurangzeb, in the year 1656, were translated into Latin, as I have already noted in this paper, by the French missionary and Orientalist, Anquetil Duperron, in 2 volumes, at Strassburg, Levrault, in 1801-02 under the title of *Oupenek'hat*. Wordsworth, who was well-versed in Latin, could very well have read Duperron's version of the Upanishads, being inspired by its review in the *Edinburgh Review* (1803), in all probability, by the British Orientalist Alexander Hamilton. Wordsworth was a regular subscriber to this magazine and he would not have missed this significant review of the mystical lore of India. Much before the German philosopher Schopenhauer,[40] the English poet seems to have been enthralled by the mystical doctrines of the Upanishads as enshrined in the version of Duperron.

The expression 'humorous stage', used in the seventh stanza of the 'Ode' (line 140), though derived from the sonnet through which Samuel Daniel dedicated his *Musophilus*,[41] is capable of being interpreted in terms of the doctrine of 'three guṇas' as expounded in the sixteenth chapter of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. In this interpretation the entire *dramatis personae* of the stage called the world could be classified into 3 categories; *tamoguṇi*, *rajoguṇi* and *satoguṇi* or the slothful, the passionate and the placid, making various combinations of these modes or qualities.

The expressions 'a Tree, of many, one' (line 51) and 'a single Field which I have looked upon' (line 52) in Stanza IV, have not been satisfactorily explained in any of the commentaries on the 'Ode' that I have come across. I believe that the tree to which Wordsworth is

alluding here is the *ashvattha* or fig tree of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* mentioned in the twenty-sixth verse of the work's tenth chapter '*Ashvatthaḥ sarvavṛkṣhaṇam*' as one of the especial manifestions of the glory of the Lord, and described in detail in the opening verses of the fifteenth chapter of the scripture. And the 'field' referred to by the poet in line 52 of the 'Ode' is the field described at great length in the first 6 verses of the thirteenth chapter of the *Gītā* where the term stands for *prakṛti* or unconscious and inacative body serving as the vehicle of the individual soul. When Wordsworth bewails the loss of his vision of divine glory from different objects of Nature, he includes in the list of those objects the fig tree as well as the field of the Soul, implying thereby that divine glory is missing even from the fig tree which is the especial manifestion of the glory of God as also from the field which is a symbol of the unconscious principle called Matter on which all phenomena of the world take place, that is, from the entire Cosmos.

Another Hindu thought is to be found in the ninth stanza of the poem where Wordsworth seems to have used the famous theory of the Sāṁkhya school of philosophy that at the time of death the Soul is carried into some other gross body through a subtle body called *Sūkṣmaśarīra* or *Lingaśarīra* consisting of intellect (*buddhi*), *ahankāra* or ego, 11 sense-motor organs and 5 subtle elements (*tanmātras*). In the first 4 lines of the stanza, I am sure, Wordsworth refers to the concept of *sūkṣmaśarīra* or *lingaśarīra* through which the Soul survives the previous gross body it was in possession of. This is what the lines, namely, 'O joy that in our embers/Is something that doth live.' The word 'embers' makes the Hindu connection so clear by calling the reader's attention to the Hindu mode of disposing of the dead body called *dāhasaṁskāra* or funeral rite. The word 'something' refers to the *sukṣmaśarīra* or *lingaśarīra* which carries the Soul after the death of

the previous gross body. The word 'nature' with a small 'n' at line 132 of the poem (third line of the stanza), as I have convincingly argued earlier, means mind or intellect which, according to the Sāṁkhya school is the leading element in the constitution of the subtle body. Line 134, namely, 'what was so fugitive' refers to the events of the previous births which are by their very nature 'fugitive' or fleeting or transitory. Lines 142-46 refer to the age-old doubts in regard to what happens to the Soul after the death of the body. The word 'Creature' with a capital 'C' clearly alludes to the individual soul or *jīvātman* which keeps changing its vehicles or bodies from birth to birth. Line 146 reiterates the idea of the transmigration of the Soul from body to body and denies in the spirit of the Vedanta philosophy the reality of the phenomena and the worlds of the Universe which are only apparently true and have no true existence at all; this is what the expression 'in worlds not realized' presumably means.

Lines 147-48 seem to be using the famous doctrine of the Sāṁkhya school of philosophy regarding the process of creation. According to this doctrine, 2 principles called *Prakṛti* and *Puruṣa* bring about the birth of beings. In this process *Puruṣa* remains inactive and inert until he is agitated by *Prakṛti* which tries to attract the attention of *Puruṣa* by means of her charms and dance. In Wordsworth's lines 'High Instincts' stand for the principle called *Puruṣa* whereas 'mortal Nature' stands for the principle called *Prakṛti*. In the line 'Did tremble like a guilty Thing surprised' there is a clear allusion to the efforts of *Prakṛti* to attract *Puruṣa* by means of her dance and other allurements. The expressions 'first affections' and 'shadowy recollections' and their being 'the fountain light of our day' refer to the aspects of the Spirit which the *Bhagavad-Gītā* glorifies in its second chapter, Verses 11–53 specially Verse 40 which reads as follows:

nehābhikramanāśosti pratyavāyo na vidyate
svalpamapyāsya dharmasya trāyate mahato bhayāt.

Wilkins had rendered this verse in the following manner:[42]

> A very small portion of this duty delivereth a man from great fear.

Wilkins's rendering of the verse is clearly imperfect—he has translated only the second line of the verse, leaving the first line completely untouched. However, lines 152-56 of the 'Ode' seem to be the elaboration of Wilkins's line cited above. Lines 156-61 are definitely based on Wilkins's translation of Verses 23-24 which read as follows:

nainaṁ chindanti śastrāṇi nainaṁ dahati pāvakaḥ
nainaṁ kledayantyāpo na śoṣayati mārutaḥa.
acchedyo'yamadāhyo'yamakledyo' aśosya eva ca.
nityaḥ sarvagataḥ sthaṇuḥ acalo'yaṁ sanātanaḥ.

Wilkins's rendering of these verses is as follows:[43]

> The weapon divideth it not, the fire burneth it not, the water corrupteth it not, the wind drieth it not away; for it is indivisible, inconsumable, incorruptible, and is not to be dried away: it is eternal, universal, permanent, immoveable.

Now, place the lines of Wordsworth by the side of these verses from the *Gītā* and realize for yourself the impact of the latter on the former:

: truths that wake
To perish never;
Which neither listlessness,
Nor mad endeavour,
Nor Man nor Boy,
Nor all that is at enemity with joy,
Can utterly abolish or destroy

Please note that the truths that Wordsworth is talking about are the facts recorded in the Hindu scripture regarding the qualities of the Soul—its immortality, eternity, incorruptibility and objectivity.

In line 162 Wordsworth suggests *yoga* or meditation as the surest method of obtaining the beatific vision of the Universal Being; the expression in 'a season of calm weather' is definitely a synecdoche for *yoga* as described in the *Gītā* VI. 10–28. And so far as the vision described in lines 164-68 of the 'Ode' is concerned, it is of *Nārāyaṇa* or Vishnu floating on the milky ocean on the body of the serpent Shesha, attended upon by all the gods, demi-gods and eternal sages like Sanaka, Sanandana and Sanatkumāra. This picture of the Lord was a favourite of Wordsworth's friend—S.T. Coleridge, who may have found it in Jone's 'Hymn to Narayana' or in Maurice's *History of Hindostana* (Vol. I).[44] The poet calls Nārāyaṇa 'immortal sea' because literally water (*nārā*) is the dwelling place of that God, His *ayana*, and also because water, as the Vedas and the *Manusmṛti* declare,[45] was the first element created at the beginning of the creation—'Apaḥ eva sasarjādau'. In either case the expression 'that immortal sea' is a metonymy for God, the Universal Soul. In creating this happy expression, the poet may have been inspired by Lord Krishna who declared in the twenty-fourth verse of the tenth chapter of the *Gītā* that He is the ocean among the floods—'*sarasām asmi sāgaraḥ*'. But who are the Children who sport upon the shore and hear the mighty waters rolling evermore? I think the children mentioned here are the famous sages called Sanaka, Sanandan, Sanatkumara etc., who are always child-like in appearance and engrossed in the worship of Nārāyaṇa. Wordsworth's characterization of the children as hearing 'the mighty waters rolling evermore' could very well be taken as referring to the unwavering and everlasting worship of the child-sages who meditate at all hours on the Universal Being.

In Stanza X of the 'Ode' a near-identity has been established between Wordsworth's divine vision of his childhood

days and his loving, human nd humane vision of his mature days; this corresponds to the identity that the *Gītā* establishes between *yoga* and *sāṁkhya*, i.e. between the path of union with god and the path of unity with all creation. Thus, the apparent antithesis between the divine vision of the earlier days and the human vision of the later years is resolved into a near-identity because divine fellowship experienced by the child and the principle of unity pervading the Universe perceived by the advanced man are basically one and the same thing with no essential difference. Man need not regret the loss of the glorious vision of childhood if he is in possession of a philosophical mind to enable him to view all objects of the world with love and sympathy alike without any discrimination whatsoever.

In the last stanza of the 'Ode', the poet has used 2 Hindu thoughts. In line 200 there is a veiled suggestion to the worship of the setting sun. Right from the times of the Vedas, the Hindus have been worshipping the rising as well as the setting sun. Worshipping the rising sun is, I think, quite acceptable to the most of the civilized societies of the world; but Hindus are perhaps the only race that pays equal respect to the setting sun. The Indian sages worshipped the setting sun because they wanted to imbibe its light which was to guide and inspire them during the absence of the sun in the night. Many British vistors to India had observed this practice of the Hindus,[46] the greatest upholders of the principle of Unity in all things and the most undiscriminating people on the earth. Like a Hindu sage of yore Wordsworth loves and worships not only the rising sun of the dawn but also the dying sun at the close of the day. (Line 200 must be read in conjunction with line 199 which refers to the poet's love for the rising sun); this is due to his mature philosophical mind which has enabled him to view all things alike. The other thought that Wordsworth has taken from the Hindus for the last stanza of his great 'Ode' is to be found in the last two lines of the poem, i.e. lines 206-07:

To me the meanest flower that blows can give

Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

Here, in the developed mature vision of the poet all things, however humble and ignoble they may be, are on a par with other so-called high and noble things: the poet feels moved at the blossoming forth not only of beautiful flowers like the rose and the lily but also at that of the meanest of flowers such as celandine. Wordsworth seems here to have been influenced by the thought enshrined in the eighteenth verse of the fifth chapter of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* which reads in the prose version of Wilkins as follows:[47]

> The learned behold him alike in the reverend Brahman perfected in knowledge, in the ox, and in the elephant; in the dog, and in him who eateth of the flesh of dogs.

The poet of the 'Ode' has definitely attained to the mental state of the enlightened soul of the Hindu scripture called the truly wise because he has developed a deep love for all beings, noble and ignoble, animate and inanimate, without any sense of discrimination whatsoever.

Thus, the discussion of the most controversial poem of Wordsworth put forth in this paper clearly proves that the poet was under the spell of Hindu religion and philosophy at the time of the composition of the great poetic utterance called 'Ode: Itimations of Immortality from Recollection of Early Childhood', that is, when the poet was thoroughly liberal in his outlook, willing to accept sublime thoughts from all quarters and from all traditions, Christian as well as non-Christian. However, when later he became orthodox in his religious views and retrogade in his world-view, he found himself utterly helpless in regard to numerous passages which overtly smacked of Hinduism. With a view to appeasing the narrow-minded readers of his poetry, he suppressed many passages which were integral to the main argument of the poem but obnoxious to the sensibility of the orthodox Christian public of England. Nonetheless, despite the suppression of some passages, the poem has remained inveterately Hindu as the analysis of the poem in the light

of Hindu scriptures like the Upanishads and the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, put forward in the preceding paragraphs clearly demonstrates.

Notes and References

1. G. Wilson Knight, *The Starlit Dome*, Oxford University Press, London, 1971, first published 1941, p. 37.
2. In all probability all critical studies of Wordsworth's poetry have dealt with the great 'Ode' in detail but the scholars listed here have provided very intensive studies of the poem at great length. Full information regarding their commentaries is given below:
   C.M. Bowra, 'Ode on Intimations of Immortality' serving as Chapter IV of *The Romantic Imagination*, The Oxford University Press, London, first published 1950, 1961 edition, pp. 76–102.
   Lionel Trilling, Essay on 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality' by Wordsworth, *The Liberal Imagination*, The Viking Press Inc., 1941; can be easily found in *Master Poems of the English Language* edited by Oscar Williams, Trident Press, New York, 1966, pp. 395–414.
   H.W. Garrod, *Wordsworth: Lectures and Essays*, Oxford University Press, 1927, Garrod's commentary on the 'Ode' is given on pp. 112–24.
   Arthur Beatty, *William Wordsworth: His Doctrine and Art in Their Historical Relations*, third edition, University of Wisconcin Press, Madison, 1961. This book has a very lucid interpretation of the great 'Ode'. The theme of the poem has been stated on p. 84.
   G. Wilson Knight, *The Starlit Dome*, op. cit., pp. 37–49.
   John K. Mathison, 'Wordsworth's Ode: Intimations of Immortality', *Studies in Philology*, XLVI (1949), pp. 419–39.
   Thomas M.R. Raysor, 'The Themes of Immortality and Natural Piety in Wordsworth's *Immortality Ode*', *PMLA*, LXIX (1954), pp. 861–75.
   Robert L. Schneider, 'The Failure of Solitude: Wordsworth's *Immortality Ode*', *JEGP* (Journal of English and Germanic Philology), LIV (1955), pp. 625–33.
   Alon Grob, 'Wordsworth's *Immortality Ode* and the Search for Identity', *ELH* (*A Journal of English Literary History*),

XXXII (1965), pp. 32–61.
Cleanth Brooks, 'Wordsworth and the Paradox of the Imagination', *The Well-Wrought Urn: Studies in the Structure of Poetry* (Copyright 1947 by Cleanth Brooks, University Paperbacks, Methuen: London, second impression 1971), pp. 101–23, serving as Chapter VII of the book.

3. See Albert Schweitzer, *Indian Thought and Its Development*, Adam & Charles Black, London, 1951, p. 190 (Chapter III: *The Bhagavadgītā*).
4. *British Critic* III (Feb. 1794), p. 156 and p. 154, VIII (Nov. 1796), p. 541, and IX (March 1797), p. 232.
Monthly Review, LXXVI (March 1787), pp. 208–10.
5. See *Coleridge: Philosophical Lectures, 1818–1819*, edited by Kathleen Coburn, The Pilot Press Limited, London, 1949, pp. 121-29.
6. 'Catalogue of the Rydal Mount Library', *Transactions of the Wordsworth Society*, No. 6 (Edinburgh, 1884), pp. 199–257.
7. *The Poetical Works of Wordsworth with Introduction and Notes*, edited by Ernest De Selincourt, Oxford University Press, London, first published 1904, 1946 edition, p. 435 (Second column, latter half).
8. Edwin Arnold's translation of the *Bhagavadgītā* appeared in 1885, exactly 100 years after the first translation of the work by Charles Wilkins; it was a verse translation (blank verse). Edwin Arnold had been in India during the tumultuous days of the Indian Revolt of 1857. He was principal, Poona College from 1857 to 1859. He was very famous as the author of an epical poem on the life of Buddha entitled *The Light of Asia or The Great Renunciation* (1879).
9. Lane Cooper (ed.), *A Concordance to the Poems of William Wordsworth*, Russell and Russell, New York, 1965, Entries on 'India' and 'India's' appear on pp. 473-74 and on 'Hindus' on p. 438.
10. For the activities of John Wordsworth in India and other Eastern nations under the aegis of the British East India Company see Sir Evan Cotton, *East Indiamen: The East India Company's Maritime Service* edited by Sir Charles Fawcett, The Batchworth Press, London, 1949, pp. 128-29. John had died at Dorset coast, the scene of the wreck of the ship Earl of Abergavenny (of which he was captain) on 5 Feb-

ruary 1805. Wordsworth recalls his brother John in numerous poems, particularly in 'Lines on a Picture of Peel Castle in a Storm', 'The Fir Grove Path', and 'Nature and the Poet', but most eloquently in 'Elegiac Verses in Memory of My Brother, John Wordsworth'.

11. See Dorothy Wordsworth's letter to her friend Jane Pollard dated 9 October 1791, *The Early Letters* edited by de Selincourt, Oxford University Press, 1935, Vol. I, p. 60.
12. Ibid., p. 60.
13. See Note 6. In the list of the books that the poet owned and kept in his library was a book on how to learn Arabic with the help of a dictionary, Marked item No. 426.
14. For easy reference on the relevant point see *The Thirteen Principal Upanishads* edited by Robert Ernest Hume, Oxford University Press, London, first published 1921, second edition 1931, pp. 391-93.
15. It must be remarked here that Wordsworth was in possession of a large number of the issues of the *Annual Register*, collected and serialized systematically right from the very commencement of the magazine in the year 1758 to the year 1820 in 35 volumes. See item No. 4 in the 'Catalogue of the Rydal Mount Library' (see Note 6).
16. J.G. Herder, 'Zur schoenen literatur und Kunst', *Shriften*, Vol. IX, p. 226.
17. Nearly 2 decades before the publication of the English prose translation of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* by (Sir) Charles Wilkins in 1785, Alexander Dow and Nathaniel Halhed had provided the West with a lot of authentic information on the religion, mythology, and philosophy of the Hindus. Dow's eminent book entitled *The History of Hindustan* (1768) contained very valuable information on Hinduism in the dedicatory letter to the King (i.e. George III) as well as in the 'Preface'. Moreover it had a very scholarly discourse entitled 'A Dissertation Concerning the Customs, Manners, Language, Religion, and Philosophy of the Hindoos'. See *The History of Hindostan* (second revised, corrected and enlarged edition with a prefix on ancient India based on Sanskrit writings; reprint edition, 3 Volumes, today and Tomorrow's Printers and Publishers, New Delhi, 1973. Similarly, Halhed had tried to familiarize the West with the best traditions of Hinduism in *A*

Code of Gentoo Laws Or Ordinations of the Pundits from a Persian Translation Made from the Original Written in the Shanscrit Language, London, 1776, which had a very learned 'Preface', spelling out the best tenets of the Hindu faith. And nearly a century earlier than these scholars, a Cambridge scholar, John Marshall, who had spent several years in India and eventually died there, sent a large amount of notes and observations on the ways and traditions of the Hindus for the inspection of his Cambridge friends—Dr Henry More and Dr John Covel. These notes have been systematically arranged and published by Sir Shafat Ahmad Khan of the University of Allahabad under the title *John Marshall in India*, London: Oxford University Press, 1927.

Since Henry More and Wordsworth—both had been students of the University of Cambridge, the Romantic poet could easily have had access to the 'Notes' that Marshall had sent from India for the inspection of the Cambridge Platonist Henry More. It seems that all the Cambridge Platonists, particularly Henry More and Ralph Cudworth, had made use of the 'Notes' of John Marshall in their important books—*An Explanation of the Grand Mystery of Godliness* (London, 1660) and *The True Intellectual System of the Universe* (London, 1678) respectively. I feel convinced that Wordsworth had read both the works. *The True Intellectual System of the Universe* by Ralph Cudworth was in his library—see item No. 220 in the 'Catalogue of the Rydal Mount Library' details of which have already been given in Note 6.

18. & 19. See James V. Logan, *Wordsworthian Criticism* (Columbius: Ohio State University Press, 1961), pp. 119–21. Those who are interested in the actual words of Plato in the *Phaedrus and Phaedo* should go in for *Plato with an English translation, containing Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Phaedo and Phaedrus* by Harold North Fowler with an Introduction by W.R.M. Lamb, William Heinemann, London, first printed 1914; reprinted 1926. Those who believe that Wordsworth had not read Plato are clearly in the dark because the poet owned all the major Dialogues of the Greek philosopher in his personal library—see items 408 and 409 in the 'Catalogue of Rydal Mount Library'. Item No. 408 lists *The Cratylus, Phaedo, Parmenides* and *Timaeus* of Plato from the Greek,

by Thomas Taylor, with notes, etc., 1793, apart from English versions of the German translations of the dialogues with Schleiermacher's Introduction (1836).

20. This somewhat controversial note accompanies the 'Ode' in most editions of Wordsworth's Poetical Works which contain the poem. It is also to be found conveniently in *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, edited by A.B. Grosart, Moxon, London, 1876.
21. The poem is in the handwriting of Dorothy Wordsworth and has been addressed to an infant. See the London weekly *The Spectator*, 10 December 1927, p. 1041.
22. Nathaniel Halhed, *A Code of Gentoo Laws*, op. cit. (See Note 17), p. 30 facing Plate VIII.
23. (Sir) Charles Wilkins, *Bhagavad-Gītā or Dialogues of Kreeshna And Arjoon*, Printed for C. Nourse, opposite Catharine-Street in the Strand, London, 1785, p. 37.
24. Robert Southey, *The Poetical Works of Robert Southey Complete In One Volume*, Longmans, Green & Co., London, 1871, p. 553 (footnote 1 on the first column of the page). *The Curse of Kehama* had appeared in 1810.
25. See the *Hellas* lines 197–210 beginning with the words 'Worlds on worlds are rolling over/From creation to decay.'
26. S.T. Coleridge's sonnet 'On a Homeward Journey Upon Hearing of the Birth of a Son' was written in September 1796.
27. W.L. Wilmshrust, 'The Bhagavad-Gita', *The Chief Scriptures of India and Its Relation to Present Events*, Philip Wellby, Henrietta Street, W.C., 1906, pp. 37-39.
28. See *The Thirteen Principal Upanishads Translated from the Sanskrit with an Outline of the Philosophy of the Upanishads* by Robert Ernest Hume, Oxford University Press, London, first published 1921, second revised edition, 1931, p. 403.
29. Ibid., p. 404.
30. (Sir) Charles Wilkins, *Bhagavad-Geeta*, op. cit., p. 112.
31. Ibid., pp. 78-79.
32. *The Thirteen Principal Upanishads*, op. cit., p. 421 (top of the page).
33. Ibid., p. 404.
34. Vide *Bhagavad-Gītā*, Chapter 13, Verse 19.
35. Colebrooke's English translation of *Sāṁkhyakārikā* is available in his *Miscellaneous Essays*, ed. by E.B. Cowell, 2nd

ed., 2 vols. (London, 1873), Vol. I, pp. 272-80.

36. *The Thirteen Principal Upanishads*, op. cit., pp. 266-67.
37. Harold Bloom and Lionel Trilling, *Romantic Poetry and Prose*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1973, p. 179 (Note on 'A Presence...by' line 121 of the 'Immortality Ode', second column, second line).
38. *The Thirteen Principal Upanishads*, op. cit., pp. 368-69.
39. Ibid., p. 353.
40. Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860), famous author of *The World as Will and Idea* (1818) had waxed lyrical on reading Duperron's translation of the Upanishads in the following words:

    > It has been the most rewarding and the most elevating reading which (with the exception of the original text) there can possibly be in the world. It has been the solace of my life, and will be of my death.

    see Parerga, 2, 185 (Werke, 6.427)
41. See Harold Bloom and Lionel Trilling, Note above 37, p. 179 (column 1). They have been mentioned in Note 37 above.
42. (Sir) Charles Wilkins, *Bhagavat-Geeta*, op. cit., p. 39.
43. Ibid., p. 37.
44. See Plate VI facing p. 401 of *The History of Hindostan* Vol. I by Thomas Maurice, London, 1793; the Plate has been entitled 'Veeshnu Slumbering' and the subject of the plate has been described in these words: 'Veeshnu reposing during a Calpa, an astronomical period of a thousand ages, upon the serpent Anant; copied from a sculptured Rock in the Ganges'. It must be borne in mind here that Maurice was a very popular writer of the times and Wordsworth's friends—S.T. Coleridge—was very fond of Maurice's *History of Hindostan* and had read the first volume of the book very closely. See on this point John Livingston Lowes, *The Road to Xanadu*, London, 1927, pp. 33-34 and 379-84.
45. The famous legal and ethical text of the Hindus called *Manusmṛti* had been translated partly by Sir William Jones under the title *The Institute of Manu*; Coleridge had read it as is clear from his reference to it in his letter to Thomas Poole dated 7 November 1796, Letter No. 152. In this work at the very outset (verse 4) water has been described as the source of all creation and Manu was only reiterating the belief of the

seers of the Vedas: 'Apaḥ eva sasarjādau' (i.e. the creator created first of all water).

46. John Marshall, for example, had noticed that the Brahmins worshipped not only the rising sun but also the setting sun—see Sir Shafaat Ahmad Khan, *John Marshall in India*, op. cit., p. 68. But several centuries earlier, the Greek sage Apollonius of Tyana had been much impressed by the worship of the setting sun by the Indian sage Iarchus and his group as reported by Philostratus in his *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, translated by F.C. Conybeare in 2 volumes, William Heinemann, London, 1912, Vol. I, p. 259.
47. Charles Wilkins, *Bhagavad-Geeta*, op. cit., p. 59.

Coleridge and the *Bhagavad-Gītā*

Of all the English Romantic poets, the most perceptive, deep as well as voracious reader, was indeed, William Wordsworth's bosom friend and Robert Southey's brother-in-law—S.T. Coleridge (1772–1834) whom Charles Lamb, the prince among English essayists, had acclaimed as 'Metaphysician, Logician, Bard'[1]—all 3 in 1. Coleridge was very widely read; he himself had once asserted: 'I have read almost everything in print.'[2] J.L. Lowes, the writer of the famous book *The Road To Xanadu*, seeking to keep track of Coleridge's varied reading, repeats this very observation of the subject of her discussion in the 'Preface' to her eminent book very admiringly and remarks: '...and he who sets out to track him through his reading leaves unread at his peril anything readable whatsoever that was extant in Coleridge's day.'[3] Thus, there cannot be any doubt whatsoever about Coleridge's wide reading and his deep penetration into the vast literature on India, her culture and philosophy that was available in the England of his day, particularly when he himself mentions several books on the subject in his own writings.

The following extract from Coleridge's unpublished works, reproduced in John H Muirhead's book entitled *Coleridge as Philosopher*, provides an unmistakable and significant evidence of our poet's fair acquaintance with the works of the Orientalists of the day. The quotation is, I do realize, pretty long but since it is not easily available and is at the same time of immense value, I have chosen to quote it in full:[4]

There is in almost all the Sanskrit philosophical and re-

ligious writings, as far as they have fallen under my notice, a character, which, it seems to me, might be plausibly accounted for on the supposition of childish intellect living among the gigantic objects, of mean thoughts and huge things—living Lilliputs among inanimate Brobdignags. Thus, their Pantheism or visible God, proved to them, not from, but in and by the evidence of their senses, taken in conjunction with the languor of a relaxing climate and the lulling influence of a deep, sombre and gigantic vegetation, seems to me a natural result of an imbecile understanding, producing indistinction, half from indolence and half intentionally by a partial closure of the eyelids, and when all hues and outlines melt into a garish mist deeming it a unity.

The translator of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* finds in the story of churning the ocean for the fourteen jewels, a wonderful affinity to Milton. I could not, I confess, help inferring from this remark that taste does not resemble the wines that improve by a voyage to and from India. For if there be one character of genius predominant in Milton it is this, that he never passes off bigness for greatness. Children never can make things big enough, and exactly so is it with the poets of India.

It would be more than we are entitled to expect of the human mind, if William Jones, Wilkins, etc., great and good as we know them to have been, had not overrated the merits of the works, the power of understanding which is of such rare occurrence, and so difficultly attained. In the present instance, there is an additional excuse; an excuse which more than acquits the judges, though it cannot prevent the reversal of their decision for to the writings in question all the notions, images and feelings, which are best calculated to excite that obscure awe that lies, midway between religion and superstition, hang and cluster. Their undoubted antiquity is so great; and the antiquity claimed for them at once so daring and so visionary that we might almost say

'liber ipse superstat', the book itself walks like a ghost of a departed world. There is a superstition involved in a survival so contrary to the ordinary experience of mankind. I have myself paid this debt of homage on my first presentation to these foreign potentates by aid of the great linguists above mentioned. But having so done, I sought to purge the sight with the euphrasy of common sense, and took a second and more leisurely view before I put the question to myself, 'And what then have I seen?' 'What are These Potentates of inmost Ind?'

Shall I confess the truth? Their next neighbour of the North, the temple-throned infant of Thibet, with the Himala behind and the cradle of the Ganges at his feet, conveys to my mind an impressive likeness, seems to me a pregnant symbol of the whole Brahmin Theosophy: without growth, without production! Abstract the enormous shapes and phantasms of the Himala, the Ganges of the fancy, and what remains?—A baby! The personality and the mystery of secondary impersonation, metamorphoses, incarnations, these and all the attributes of persons dance in and out like wandering flashes, or motley aliens from a distant country, the mutes of the show, often enough to remind us of their incompatibility with the doctrines of omneity and infinity, which are the constant theme and the philosophical import of the Indian theology; but without even an attempt to resolve the riddle. These impersonations or Avatars betray themselves as fables half verbal and built on accidents of language, and half symbolical; though nothing can be more obscure and conjectural than their direct interpretation.

This long extract is a faithful record of Coleridge's admission of his debts to the great Orientalists like Sir William Jones and Charles Wilkins and of his earlier fascination with Indian philosophy and religion as also of his subsequent disenchantment with them. It makes a specific mention of the

Bhagavad-Gītā and displays Coleridge's close acquaintance with several aspects of Hinduism and with its inherent weaknesses. It comments on one of Wilkins's notes to his translation of the *Gītā*—note number 78 on the word 'Oochisravă' occurring in the twenty-seventh verse of the tenth chapter of the *Gītā*, covering pages 45–51 of Wilkin's work. The remarks of Wilkins that had occasioned Coleridge's sharp reaction are cited below:[5]

> ... The story of churning the ocean for what are called the Chowda Rattan or fourteen jewels, is of such a curious nature, and in some parts, bears such a wonderful affinity to Milton's description of war in heaven, that the Translator thinks it will afford the reader an agreeable contrast to the subject of this work, and serve as a further specimen of his version of the *Mahābhārata*, from which both are extracted.

The Coleridge of later times when he had fallen a clear victim to Christian bigotry simply could not tolerate the idea of a great Christian poet being compared to a Hindu poet; to him the comparison appeared to be wholly prepostrous. However that may be, the extract fully reveals that once upon a time the early Coleridge himself had felt overawed by the Hindu works in their English translations during his first encounter with them. Clearly, the extract, cited above, was the product of the poet's orthodox days when all his liberal thinking had disappeared. His response to the French Revolution, too, had met with a similar fate. Nonetheless, it is very remarkable that Coleridge does not use the spelling of *Bhagavad-Gītā* as given in Wilkins's book (i.e. Bhagavat-Geeta); he spells it as 'Bhagavad Gita'. Evidently, he had got this transliteration of the title of the Hindu text from some other source; the spelling that he adopts is the really correct form of the title; only he does not use the diacritical mark '–' over the letters 'i' and 'a' in the word 'Gita'.

The poet seems to have read the *Gītā* quite early. John Drew is of the opinion that Coleridge came to catch hold of

Wilkins's translation of the Sanskrit text round about 1796; I do not find any thing objectionable in this supposition. That he had read it quite early is clearly hinted at in his own admission made in the extract cited above, namely, 'I have myself paid this debt of homage *on my first presentation* to these foreign potentates by aid of the great linguists above mentioned.' (italics mine) The expression 'on my first presentation to these foreign potentates' can be easily interpreted as referring to the period 1795–96, the period of Coleridge's liberal and even radical thinking and action, when the *Religious Musings* (1796) having clear traces of thoughts of the *Gītā* and 'Ode to the Departing Year' based on the Hindu concept of *Ṛta*, were composed and published. That Coleridge had studied Wilkins's *Gītā* quite avidly is clear from the fact that he quotes a very long passage from its eleventh chapter, covering pages 91-93 of Wilkins's book, in his philosophical lecture that he had delivered on 4 January 1819 at the Crown and Anchor, Strand.[6] In this lecture, he also cites a passage from the famous letter of Warren Hastings, addressed to Nathaniel Smith, the Chairman of the then British East India Company, recommending the publication of Wilkins's *Gītā*; Hastings's letter is incorporated in Wilkins's eminent translation of the Hindu text. Coleridge quotes the statement of Hastings in which the first Governor-General of British India places the *Gītā* on par with the first and the sixth books of Milton's *Paradise Lost* insofar as the sublimity of thoughts of the 2 texts is concerned. Coleridge does not take kindly to this observation of Hastings and sarcastically says: 'That, however, is a piece of taste.'

Likewise, in another philosophical lecture that he had delivered on 28 December 1818 at the Crown and Anchor, Strand, he attacked the Oriental scholars for their view that Pythagoras had learnt mathematical and arithmetical sciences from the Indians. He candidly observed:[7]

> As to the idea that Pythagoras had learnt this (i.e. the mathematical and arithmetical sciences) in Egypt, India, and so forth, and that it was part of the knowl-

> edge of those times, that may be dismissed in a few words. Thales had been in Egypt it appears, and instructed by the priests, and yet though he professed, as it appears, certain experimental mathematical knowledge such as a carpenter might have with us, yet still he had learned nothing of science properly so called. What the state of information must have been when Pythagoras, after having travelled through Egypt, Persia, and India, came back and was transported and offered a hecatomb on having discovered the thirty-seventh proposition of Euclid, is a pretty good answer to those men who would suppose a high state of knowledge in scientific men who were nobody knows who. But such an idea has been carried to a most extravagant height by some of our modern contenders for Indian wisdom.

On the last line of the above extract, Kathleen Coburn adds the following note: 'Coleridge here probably refers to Wilkins or to Warren Hastings who introduced that work and possibly to Sir William Jones, the distinguished orientalist and comparative philologist.'[8] Indeed, it is ironical that Coleridge who seems to have been disinclined to accept the view of the Orientalists regarding Pythagoras's visit to India and his acquirement of Indian wisdom, should put forth his own argument in support of that very view in that very 'Lecture' on the ground that in his *Embassy to Ava* (London, 1800) Michael Symes, Esq., Lieutenant-Colonel in His Majesty's 76th Regiment, had maintained that the Buddhists of Burma regarded beans as a taboo even when he had visited that country. Coleridge expresses the view that the people of Burma had received the Buddhist religion from India where beans were not a taboo in the eighteenth century. From this very fact, he argues, it follows that the original Buddhism in India regarded the beans as a taboo, at least at the time when Pythagoras visited that country. Naturally, the latter (i.e. Pythagoras) had evidently learnt of this mystic belief from those original followers of Buddhism of India who had taught the same lessons to the people of Burma. Coleridge

has a lengthy discourse on the topic in his work entitled *Table Talk*, too, where on pages xiii–xivii he opposes the views of Poole and De Quincey on beans as a taboo in Pythagoras.[9]

Coleridge was well-read in the classical histories about India and her philosophical traditions. In his philosophical lecture that he had delivered on 11 January 1819, he makes the following remark:[10]

> Socrates seems to have proceeded with the same temper which we are told was attributed to him with some tenderness of reproach by an Indian philosopher Calanos who speaking of (Socrates, Diogenes) and other great men, said that they were men of great parts and wise men, but they paid too much obedience to the laws; which could only mean, in teaching truth they were too favourable to the prejudices and customs of those around them, alluding doubtless to their toleration of idolatry.

In point of fact, Coleridge is here thinking of another Indian philosopher—Dandamis—who, according to Plutarch, 'was gentler (i.e. than Calanos) and ... after hearing fully about Socrates, Pythagoras and Diogenes, remarked that the men appeared ... to have passed their lives in too much awe of the laws.'[11]

As I have hinted above, Coleridge's response to India can be divided into 2 phases: one liberal and enthusiastic and the other quite critical and a little hostile. The first phase of his response to India comprised the years between 1793 to roundabout 1815 and the second phase entails the years beginning from 1815 to the year of his death in 1834. His disenchantment with India, it seems to me, was caused by a complaint of the German philosopher Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Von Schelling (1775–1854), namely, 'now we hear of nothing but the language and wisdom of India.'[12] It was in 1815 that in an issue of his own journal *The Friend*, he took up the complaint of Schelling and launched his crusade against the undue importance that was being given to Sanskrit texts by the Ori-

entalists of the day all over Europe. Schelling, like Coleridge, had been deeply impressed by the mass of ancient Indian literature that was being gradually unearthed and made public in the Western world in different European languages. The influence of Indian pantheism is writ large on his *System des Transzendentalen Idealismus* (1800) as well as on his *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur* (1801). But like Coleridge, Schelling, too, recanted later.

However, just as a German philosopher became responsible for Coleridge's disenchantment with India, it was the German enthusiasm for Indian philosophy and religion that had inspired the English poet's mind (which had already been in touch with the newly discovered literary wealth of India) to study the thoughts and ideas of India with more care and seriousness, when he visited Germany in September 1798 in the company of Wordsworth and Dorothy and stayed there until July 1799. It is true that it was the British Orientalists who had taken the lead in translating and making the Sanskrit texts available to the West at the close of the eighteenth century, the translation of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* by Charles Wilkins in 1785 being the earliest venture in this direction, but it is equally true that Germany had had a spiritual affinity with India since 1488 when Anthonius von Pforr had made a German translation of the collection of animal fables called *Pancatantra* under the title *Das Buch der byspel* (*Beispiede*) *der alten wysen* (*Weisen*). I agree that the English translation of the *Gītā* was done directly from the original Sanskrit whereas the German translation of *Pancatantra* was not direct but circuitous—via Pahlavi, Old Arabic, Hebrew and Latin, but then, it was older by 3 centuries. When Coleridge visited Germany, the country's literary atmosphere was surcharged with Indianism. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832) had already glorified India and her culture when he waxed lyrical over Kalidasa's greatest play *Abhijnānaśākuntalam* after reading it in G. Forster's translation entitled *Sacontala oder der Entscheidende Ring* (1791), done into German from the Latin translation of the Sanskrit play by Sir William

Jones (1789) who had rendered the same into English in 1790, it is pretty certain that Coleridge had read Goethe's eulogy on the drama of Kalidasa:[13]

> Willst Du die Blute des fruhen, die Fruchte des spatern Jahres
> Willst Du was reizt und entzuckt, willst du was sattigt und nahrt
>
> Willst Du den Himmel, die Erde, mit Einem Namen begreifen;
> Nenn'ich Sakontala, Dich, und so ist Alles gesagt.
>
> (Wouldst thou the young year's blossoms and the fruits of its decline
> And all by which the soul is charmed, enraptured, feasted, fed?
> Wouldst thou the earth and Heaven itself in one sole name combine?
> I name thee, O Sakuntala, and all at once is said!)

That Goethe's praise of the Sanskrit play was sincere and heartfelt is clear from the fact that he had used the technique of the Sanskrit drama in the 'Prologue' to his magnum opus, the poetic play entitled *Faust*, by presenting the Manager and the Dramatic Poet along with Merryman in the 'Prelude' recalling to our mind the dialogue between Sūtradhāra and Natī at the beginning of the Sanskrit drama, which had been praised by another German thinker by way of the observation that a drama like *Shakuntalā* appears in 2,000 years.[14]

Coleridge may also have been inspired by J.G. Herder's selection of a few stanzas from the *Gītā* in his 'Thoughts of Some Brahmins' and his quotations from the Sanskrit text in his *Ideen Zur Philosophie der Geschichte* (Thoughts on the Philosophy of History) which had been published during 1784–91. Herder had also been a great admirer of *Shakuntalā*; he used to lay greater store by the Indian books of poetry than by religious books of India such as Vedas, the Upaniṣads and the Purāṇas. In an article entitled *Zur schoenen Liter-*

atur und Kunst, published in the *Shriften* (Vol. ix: 226) he asserted:

> Do you not wish with me that, instead of these endless religious books of the Vedas, Upvedas and Upangas, they would give us the more useful and more agreeable works of the Indians, and especially their best poetry of every kind? It is here the mind and character of a nation is best brought to light before us, and I gladly admit that I have received a truer and more real notion of the manner of thinking among the ancient Indians from this one *Shakuntalā* than from all their Upeknats (i.e. Upanishads) and *Bagarvedams* (i.e. *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*).

An indirect translation of the *Manusmṛti* based on the English translation of Sir William Jones had been brought out in German by J.C. Huttner in 1797 and similarly an indirect translation of *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* had been done in German in 1791. The greatest philosopher of Europe of the day—Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), had also felt the power of the Sanskrit texts and glorified India's philosophical speculation at great length.[15] In fact, Germany had become a second home of Sanskrit learning. Naturally, when Coleridge visited Germany and found almost all the best German minds welcoming and admiring the religious and literary works of India, he felt deeply inspired to follow in the footsteps of his German mentors—Kant, Herder, Schelling, Goethe and the Schlegel brothers.[16] The result was that he started studying the works of the Orientalists, dealing with India, with a renewed vigour and gusto, and in the process India became a part and parcel of his imagination and sensibility. Let us now discuss a few significant aspects of India scattered in the works of the great English thinker and poet, with a view to gauging the extent of his interest in India and her literary and philosophical traditions.

His philosophical lectures supply several references to India some of which have already been pointed out. In the edition of Kathleen Coburn, in the Philosophical Lecture

Number II we come across the clear admission of Coleridge regarding Pythagoras's alleged visit to India. He candidly remarks:[17] 'To those who admit that he (i.e. Pythagoras) was in Egypt, that he went through Persia to India, I concede.' He has also given his own plea in support of this view quite in detail, covering 2 pages of Coburn's rare book. We have already given the main points of his arguments. In a note incorporated on page 104 of Coburn's book, Coleridge observes: 'As to his (i.e. Pythagoras's) taming of serpents, he might have learnt the art (why call it trick?) in India.' Other allusions to India in that book occur on pages 86, 99, 100, 127-29, 385, 398 and 404. The English philosopher alludes to the Greek philosopher Apollonius of Tyana's travel to India on page 240. On page 110 while paying a tribute to India, he observes: 'No, doubtless the state of India and Egypt was precisely what may be expressed and which the Bible fully expresses elsewhere, a state of high civilization and of all that can arise out of civilization but without any cultivation whatsoever.' By the term 'cultivation' here Coleridge means scientific spirit and historical sense.

In *Biographia Literaria* (1817) India is mentioned as 1 of the 4 countries where 'the analysis of the mind had reached its noon and manhood while experimental research was still in its dawn and infancy.'[18] In the same work, Coleridge makes use of one of the myths of India regarding the situation of the earth; he calls it 'the Brahmin creed' and employs it as an analogy:[19]

> We might as rationally chant the Brahmin creed of the tortoise that supported the bear that supported the elephant that supported the world, to the tune of this is the house that Jack built.

Clearly, Coleridge is referring in the above extract to the Pauraṇic geography regarding the situation of the earth, very beautifully expressed in a verse by the Hindi poet Padmākara, which begins with the words: '*Kūram pai kola, kolahū pai Shesha kundalī hai*'.

In the Philosophical Lecture Number X of Coburn's book, Coleridge reveals his acquaintance with Porphyry's eulogy on the Indians and states that the philosophical practices of the neo-Platonists were precisely like those of the Brahmins and Samaneans[20] (i.e. Buddhists and Jains).

A copy of J.A Dubois's *Description of the Character, Manners and Customs of the People of India*, popularly famous as *Hindu Manners* (1817), containing Coleridge's autograph notes, is preserved in the British Museum library. In the marginalia to pages 323-24 of this copy of the book, Coleridge describes Spinoza as 'the sternest and most consistent of Adwitamists'.[21] By the term 'Adwitamists' Coleridge means 'Advaitins' (i.e. the followers of the Advaitavedānta school of Indian philosophy, founded by Ādi Shankarāchārya. This is, indeed, a measure of Coleridge's knowledge concerning India and her philosophy.

In the Philosophical Lecture Number XIII in Coburn's book, Coleridge associates the pantheism of India with that of Spinoza, who, recognized an independent deity and a pentent creation. In *Aids to Reflection in the Formation of a Manly Character on the Several Ground of Prudence, Morality and Religion* (London, 1836), Coleridge pays a mixed tribute to the Indians:

> Examine the journals of our zealous missionaries, I will not say among the Hottentots or Esquimanx but in the highly civilized, though fearfully uncultivated inhabitants of ancient India. How often, and how feelingly, do they describe the difficulty of rendering the simplest chain of thought intelligible to the ordinary natives, the rapid exhaustion of their whole power of attention; and with what distressful effect it is exerted while it lasts! Yet it is among those that the hideous practices of self-torture chiefly prevail. O! if folly were no easier than wisdom, it being often so very much more grievous, how certainly might these unhappy slaves of superstition be converted to Christianity! But alas; to swing by hooks passed through the back, or to walk in shoes with nails

> of iron pointed upwards through the soles—all this is so much less difficult, demands so much exertion of the will than to reflect, and by reflection to gain knowledge and tranquillity (p. 12).

Elaborating further on the religious superstitions prevailing in India of his day as reported by the missionaries in English journals, Coleridge remarks:

> It is not true that ignorant persons have no notions of the advantages of truth and knowledge in the conduct, the immunities, and the superior powers of the possessors. Were they attainable by pilgrimages, the most toilsome, or the penances the most painful, we should assuredly have as many pilgrims and self-tormentors in the science of true religion, as now exist under the tyranny of papal or Brahman superstition (p. 13).

Similarly, criticizing the want of the concept of the Original Sin in all Indian religions—whether Hindu or Buddhist, Coleridge says:

> With these expositions I hasten to contrast the scriptural article respecting Original Sin, or the corrupt and sinful nature of the Human Will, and the belief which alone is required of us as Christians. And here the first thing to be considered, and which will at once remove a world of error, is; that this is no tenet first introduced or imposed by Christianity, and which, should a man see reason to disclaim the authority of the Gospel, would no longer have any claim on his attention. It is no perplexity that a man may get rid by ceasing to be a Christian and which has no existence for a philosophical Deist. It is a FACT affirmed, indeed, in the Christian Scriptures *alone* with the force and frequency proportioned to its consummate importance; but a fact acknowledged in *every* religion that retains the least glimmering of the patriarchical faith in a God infinite, yet personal—a fact assumed or implied as the basis of every religion,

> of which relics remain of earlier date than the last and total Apostacy of the Pagan world, when the faith in the great I AM the CREATOR was extinguished in the sensual polytheism, which is inevitably the final result of Pantheism, or the worship of Nature; and the only form under which the Pantheistic Scheme—that, according to which, the world is God, and the material universe itself the one only absolute Being—can exist for a people, or become the popular creed (p. 275).

That the criticism was specially aimed at the religions of India of his own day (or at least of the times of the *Gītā*) becomes quite clear from the following observation of the author:

> Thus, in the most ancient Books of the Brahmins, the deep sense of this Fact, and the doctrines grounded on obscure traditions of the promised remedy, are seen struggling, and now gleaming, now flashing, through the Mist of Pantheism, and producing the incongruities and gross contradictions of the Brahmin Mythology: while in the rival sect—in that most strange Phenomenon, the religious Atheism of the Buddhists with whom God is only universal Matter considered abstractedly from all particular forms—the Fact is placed among the delusions, natural to man, which, together with other superstitions, grounded on a supposed essential difference between Right and Wrong, the Sage is to decompose and precipitate from the menstruum of his own refined apprehensions! Thus, in denying the Fact, they virtually acknowledge it (p. 276).

I do not want to question the validity of what Coleridge has to say about the level of the metaphysical thinking of the Indians, for that is beyond the scope of the present discussion. The point of interest here, however, is the fact that the English poet and thinker had gathered a lot of knowledge of the history of the philosophical speculation in India. In the extract, cited above from page 275 of the *Aids to Re-*

flection, he purports to state the high point of metaphysical thinking reached by the seers of the Upanishads, succinctly stated in the expression 'I AM the CREATOR.' Here, Coleridge is undoubtedly referring to the famous Upanishadic formula, namely, (*ahaṁ brahmāsmi*, i.e. I am Brahma the Supreme Reality), whose lofty idealism, Coleridge bewails, got degenerated subsequently in the 'sensual polytheism' of the Purāṇas. The English thinker attacks this later trend of the philosophical thinking in India because in his view it was tantamount to the worship of the world or matter. 'What a downfall of philosophical thought!', Coleridge exclaims. In the extract from page 276 of the *Aids to Reflection*, he displays his acquaintance with Puranic mythology which is full of all kinds of absurdity. What is most surprising is his awareness of Buddhism and some of its tenets though Buddhist literature became available to the West quite late when T.W. Rhys Davids and Hermann Oldenberg published authentic translations of Buddhist texts in the *Sacred Books of the East* edited by F. Max Müeller in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Coleridge had become acquainted with many of the philosophical and mythological notions of the Hindus as early as 1797. In a letter to his friend Thelwall dated 14 October 1797 he wrote:[22]

> I can at times feel strongly the beauties, in themselves, and for themselves—but more frequently all things appear little—all the knowledge that can be acquired, child's play—the universe itself—what but an immense heap of little things? I can contemplate nothing but parts, and parts are all little—My mind feels as if it ached to behold and know something great—something one and indivisible—and it is only in the faith of this that rocks or waterfalls, mountains or caverns give me the sense of sublimity or majesty. But in this faith all things counterfeit infinity.... It is but seldom that I raise and spiritualize my intellect to this height—and at other times I adopt the Brahmin Creed, and say—*It*

is better to sit than stand, it is better to lie than sit, it is better to sleep than wake, like the Indian Vishna, to float along an infinite ocean cradled in the flower of Lotus, and wake once in a million years for a few minutes just to know that I was going to sleep for a million years more... (emphasis added).

It is worth noting that the thoughts expressed in the italicized portion of the above extract were used by William Wordsworth in his *Excursion III.270–79*. Perhaps, at some point of time Coleridge had discussed the notions of the Hindus with Wordsworth who liked them so much so that he thought them worthy of his philosophical epic of which the *Excursion* was to be the middle part. As regards Coleridge, he had got the Hindu ideas either from N.B. Halhed's *Code of Gentoo Laws* (London, 1776, p. xxxv) or from an intelligent article entitled 'Characters' that had appeared in the *Annual Register* for 1782 (pp. 31-39) which the English thinker had borrowed from the Bristol library for a period beginning from 26 February to 10 March 1796.[23] However, the ultimate source of the thought concerned is *Māṇḍūkyopaniṣad* which Coleridge may have read in its Latin version when it was published along with 49 other Upanishads by the French missionary and Orientalist Du Perron in a 2-volume work entitled *Oupnekhat* during 1801-02, done from a Persian translation of the works made in 1656 by the Moghul Prince Dara Shikoh, brother of Aurangzeb. In the Verses 3-7 of the *Māṇḍūkyopaniṣad*, the 4 states of the Self or Brahma have been described in their ascending order: waking, dreaming, deep sleep and superconsciousness. In the last sentence of the above extract from Coleridge's letter to Thelwall, the poet refers to the Hindu concept of 'Kalpa' during which Nārāyaṇa or Vishnu remains asleep and at the end of which He wakes up for a new creation. In all probability Coleridge had got this notion of the Hindus from Thomas Maurice's *History of Hindustan* (London, 1793 in 2 volumes), a book which, according to John Livingston Lowes,[24] Coleridge read very closely. Plate VI facing page 401 of the first volume of this

book depicts most graphically Vishnu 'reposing during...a thousand ages'. It is very surprising, however, that Coleridge has failed to write the name of the Indian god correctly: instead of Vishnu he writes 'Vishna'. Perhaps, the English poet transliterated the name of the Indian god quite jokingly in imitation of the names of other Indian gods such as Krishna and Brahmā. Moreover, Vishnu is normally represented as wrapped up by Ananta or Sheshanāga rather than a lotus; it is Brahmā who is depicted as sitting on the flower 'Padma' or 'Kamala' ('Lotus') and hence his synonyms 'Padmāsana' and 'Kamalāsana'. Coleridge has transferred the attribute of Brahmā to Vishnu. This is an example of henotheism, the tendency of writers to attribute to their favourite gods or goddesses the qualities and functions, normally associated with other gods and goddesses. For example, many Puraṇas centering on Vishnu have attributed to Him the function of creating the universe, traditionally ascribed to Brahmā. Similarly, many Purāṇas centering on Shiva have no hesitation in attributing to Him all the functions of the Trinity—preservation, destruction and creation though only the middle function (i.e. destruction) is His normal function. Thus, Coleridge followed only the practice of the Purāṇas in describing Vishnu as cradled in a lotus although the Lord's normal pose is that of *sheshashāyin* ('one sleeping on the body of Sheshanāga'). Perhaps, he was aware of the henotheistic tendency of the Purāṇas.

In his letter dated 7 November 1796 (Monday night), addressed to Thomas Poole in whom he confided many a secret of his, Coleridge mentions Sir William Jones's translation of the famous legal and ethical guidebook of the Hindus called *Manusmṛti* under the title *The Ordinances of Manu*, exclaiming that the first chapter of the work was truly sublime:

> Manu's *Ordinances* exhibit a mournful picture of a hideous union of Priestcraft and Despotism. The man told George Dyer that it would furnish unanswerable arguments against the divine Legation of Moses, spoke

what he did not himself believe—or rather believed because he wished it. The first chapter contains sublimity —and next to the first the last is the best.

Professor E.L. Grigg's note on the expression 'Manu's Ordinances', used in the above extract, reads: 'Institutes of Hindu Law; or the Ordinances of Menu', translated by Sir William Jones, 1794.[25] Evidently, Coleridge had read rather thoroughly whatever was available of *Manusmṛti* in Jones's English version for the English jurist had failed to complete his translation of the law codes of the Hindus.

In his poetic play entitled *Osorio* (finished in October 1797), Coleridge put his feelings regarding Vishnu, expressed in his letter to John Thelwall that I have already cited, into the mouth of the Moorish woman named Alhadra:

O! would to Allah,
The raven and the Seamew were appointed
To bring me food—or rather that my soul
Could drink in life from the universal air
It were a lot divine in some small skiff
Along some ocean's boundless solitude
To float for ever with a careless course,
And think myself the only Being alive (V. i. 49–56).

The same speech was transposed in *Remorse* (IV. iii. 13–20) under which title *Osorio* was successfully produced in 1813. In fact, the pose of Vishnu described in the letter to Thelwall had taken such a possession of the mind and soul of Coleridge that the poet repeated it in the dramatic fragment entitled *The Triumph of Loyalty* (begun and abandoned in 1800) of which a fragment was published by the poet in his *Poetical Works* (I, pp. 421-23) in the year 1817. In this fragment the same image has been employed:

Oh! there is Joy above the name of Pleasure,
Deep self-possession, an intense Repose,
No other than as Eastern Sages feign
The God; who floats upon a Lotos Leaf,

Dreams for a thousand ages; then awaking
Creates a world, then loathing the dull task
Relapses into blessedness.

When the poet revised the above passage, the revised version read as follows:

Deep repose of bliss we lay
No other than as Eastern Sages Gloss
The God who floats upon a Lotos Leaf
Dreams for a thousand ages, then awaking
Creates a world, then loathing the dull task
Relapses into blessedness.

The above discussion clearly demonstrates that Coleridge knew a lot about India and her cultural, religious and literary traditions. He knew that the language of ancient India was Sanskrit. He had read very carefully the *Bhagavad-Gītā* in Charles Wilkins's English prose translation of 1785 and *Manusmṛti* in the English prose rendering of Sir William Jones, published in 1794. And above all, Thomas Maurice's *History of Hindostan* (London, 2 volumes, 1795–98) was the one book which, according to the writer of *The Road to Xanadu*, as has been mentioned earlier, Coleridge read very closely.[26] Needless to say that Maurice's book is a virtual encyclopaedia of Indian mythology, philosophy and religion.

It is now high time that we examined the extent to which Coleridge had imbibed the word and spirit of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* in his imaginative writings.

In September 1796, Coleridge wrote a sonnet entitled 'On a Homeward Journey Upon Hearing of the Birth of a Son'. I quote the entire text of the sonnet for the convenience of the readers:

Oft o'er my brain does that strange fancy roll
Which makes the present (while the flash doth last)
Seem a mere semblance of some unknown past
Mixed with such feelings as perplex the soul
Self-questioned in her sleep; and some have said

We lived, ere yet this robe of flesh we wore.
O my sweet baby when I reach my door,
If heavy looks should tell me thou art dead,
(As sometimes, through excess of hope, I fear)
I think that I should struggle to believe
'Thou wert a spirit, to this nether sphere
Sentenced for some more venial crime to grieve;
Didst scream, then spring to meet heaven's quick reprieve
While we wept idly o'er thy little bier.'

Irene H. Chayes in a brilliant article entitled 'Coleridge—Metempsychosis', published in the Johns Hopkins University journal called *JLH* or *Journal of English Literary History* (December, 1958), argued that it is to Chevalier Ramsay (1680–1743) and Thomas Taylor (1758–1835)—both of whom Coleridge was studying in 1796—that the poet was indebted for his notion of reincarnation. Chayes seems to have been blissfully unaware of the fact that our poet had read the Hindu texts—the *Bhagavad-Gītā* as well as *Manusmṛti* by 1796, of course, in their English translations. And since the original home of the doctrine of metempsychosis or re-birth is India, as the great German mentor of Coleridge, namely, Fredrich von Schlegel (1772–1829) had asserted, is it not more probable that Coleridge had borrowed the notion of re-incarnation or re-birth for his sonnet, under discussion, from the *Gītā* which articulates the doctrine in the clearest possible terms in its second chapter. I firmly believe that the robe-imagery used in line 6 of the sonnet is a clear pointer to the fact that the poet was thinking of the twenty-second verse of the second chapter of the *Gītā*. It is worth mentioning that much before the publication of Wilkins's English translation of the Hindu text, this verse had already been quoted in the original Devanāgarī script and rendered into English by N.B. Halhed's eminent book entitled *Gentoo Laws* as far back as 1776; it was also incorporated in the first volume of Maurice's *History of Hindostan* of which Coleridge was so enamoured. I quote the original

verse in Devanāgarī script and then transliterate it in Roman letters:

वासांसि जीर्णानि यथा विहाय
नवानि गृह्णति नरोऽपराणि।
तथा शरीराणि विहाय जीर्णान्य
न्यानि संयाति नवानि देही

vāsānsi jīrṇāni yathā vihāya
navāni gṛhnāti naro'parāṇi
tathā śarīrāṇi vihāya jīrṇany-
anyāni saṁyāti navāni dehī.

Wilkins had rendered this verse in the following manner:[27]

> As a man throweth away old garments, and putteth on new, even so the soul, having quitted its old mortal frame, entereth into others which are new.

Sensitive readers cannot help marking the similarity between the thought of line 6 of the sonnet and that of the verse from the *Gītā*, the garment image used in the sonnet unmistakably links it with the verse of the *Gītā*. I also believe that the thoughts underlying lines 5-6 of the sonnet can be traced, with much greater cogency, to the opening verses of the fourth chapter of the *Gītā*. Lord Krishna teaches Arjuna the lesson of *karmayoga* in the third chapter of the scripture and in the opening lines of Chapter IV He tells Arjuna the history of that *yoga*—its rise, growth and disappearance. The Lord says that Vivaśvat, the sun-god was the first person whom He had taught this *yoga* at the beginning of the creation of the present world. Arjuna feels baffled at this affirmation of the Lord because the Lord is his contemporary whereas Vivaśvat had flourished millions of years back. So Arjuna seeks a clarification in the matter. Krishna replies to Arjuna's query by revealing a great mystery:

बहूनि मे व्यतीतानि जन्मानि तवार्जुन।
तान्यहं वेद सर्वाणि, न त्वं वेत्थ परन्तप।।

bahūni me vyatītani janmani tavārjuna
tāny ahaṁ veda sarvāṇi, na tvaṁ vettha parantapa.

Wilkins rendered this verse as follows:[28]

> *Both I and thou have passed many births.* Mine are known unto me; but thou knowest not of thine. (emphasis added).

I strongly feel that the italicized portion of this fifth verse of the fourth chapter of the *Gītā* is the basic source of Coleridge's words: 'and some have said/We lived, ere yet this robe of flesh we wore'. By the expression 'and some have said' the English poet clearly means the Indian sages such as Veda-Vyāsa, author of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* or Lord Krishna Himself.

The ideas as expressed in the last 4 lines of Coleridge's sonnet seem to have been derived from Verses 37–41 of the sixth chapter of the *Gītā*. The context in the Hindu text is the destiny of a soul which, while practising *yoga*, commits some deviation from the right path, prescribed for it, and thus fails to reach perfection in *yoga*-discipline. About the destiny of such an erring *yogin*, the Lord says:

> प्राप्य पुण्यकृतां लोकानुषित्वा शाश्वतीः समाः।
> शुचीनां श्रीमतां गेहे योगभ्रष्टोऽभिजायते।।
>
> *prāpya puṇyakṛtāṁ lokān uṣitva śaśvatīḥ samāḥ*
> *śucīnāṁ śrīmatāṁ gehe yogabhraṣṭo'bhijāyate.*

Wilkins had translated this verse in the following manner:[29]

> A man whose devotions have been broken off by death, having enjoyed for an immensity of years the rewards of his virtues in the regions above, at length is born again in some holy and respectable family.

According to the *Gītā*, a *yogin* who swerves from his charted path, is transported to the heavenly regions owing to his virtues and after enjoying the comforts of those regions for a fixed period determined by the extent of his virtues, gets reborn on the earth in the family of a holy and virtuous man. Coleridge's sonnet, too, purports to state the same belief. The poet fancies that his newly born son had taken his

birth on the earth in his (the poet's holy family) after having resided for long in the heavenly world as a result of some fault or crime presumably committed in some earlier birth before being sent to the heavenly world; his new birth in the family of the Coleridges is intended to provide him an opportunity to redeem himself and make himself worthy of the ultimate liberation called *mukti* or *mokṣa*—to 'meet heaven's quick reprieve'. The idea of meeting heaven's quick reprieve seems to have been based on the forty-fifth verse of the sixth chapter of the *Gītā*: ततो याति परां गतिम् (*tato yāti parām gatim*) which in Wilkins's version reads: 'at length goeth to the supreme abode'.

I now take up another poem of Coleridge entitled 'Greek Ode On Astronomy' which the poet had submitted for Brown Gold Medal in 1793 while studying at the University of Cambridge. The poem can be conveniently found in the appendix to Professor J.B. Beer's eminent book *Coleridge the Visionary*[30] in its English version by the poet's friend and brother-in-law, Robert Southey. The last stanza of the poem which Beer calls the most faithful to the original reads as follows:

> I may not call thee mortal, then, my soul
> Immortal longings lift thee to the skies:
> Love of thy native home influences thee now,
> With pious madness wise.
> *Know then thyself; expand thy wings divine*
> *Soon mingled with thy fathers thou shalt shine*
> *A star among the starry throng,*
> *A god the Gods among.* (emphasis added).

Professor Beer clarified the thought, contained in the underlined portion of the stanza, in the following words:[31]

> And when in the last stanza, Coleridge addresses his soul as a potential genius of sort, he expresses the ideal of the romantic man: the belief in self-knowledge; the desire to soar into the empyrean; and the most daring

of all; the belief that when this ideal is achieved the genius is in a state of equality with the divine—'A God the Gods among.'

Now, my contention is that the thoughts expressed above are Indian, through and through. All students of the Upaniṣads know that the basic teaching of these mystical works of India is: आत्मानं विद्धि (*ātmānaṁ viddhi*—know thyself) and तत्त्वमसि श्वेतकेतो (*tattvam asi śvetaketo*—'O Svetaketu, thou art that, i.e. Brahma). When the seeker after truth realizes his true self, he starts declaring: अहं ब्रह्मास्मि (*ahaṁ brahmāsmi*—I am Brahm i.e. God). *Mundakopaniṣad* 3.2. declares: स योह वै तत्परमं ब्रह्म वेद ब्रह्मैव भवति (*śa yo ha vai tatparamaṁ Brahma veda Brahmaiva bhavati*—He, verily, who knows that supreme Brahma, becomes very Brahma). It is worth recording here that in the title to his Latin translation of the Upanishads, the French Orientalist Anquetil Duperron, had set this very sentence of the *Mundakopaniṣad* as the summary of the contents of the Upaniṣads: '*quisqui Deum intelligit, Deus fit*', that is, 'whosoever knows God becomes God'.[32] It is true that Duperron's 'Oupanekhāt' appeared in 2 volumes in 1801-02, several years after Coleridge's poem was composed but then, Duperron's manuscript had been in circulation in the last 2 decades of the eighteenth century among the scholarly circles of Europe as well as Britain. Moreover, Dow, Halhed, and most authoritatively Sir William Jones in his brilliant essay entitled 'On the Philosophy of the Asiatics' published in the *Asiatic Researches* Volume IV refer to it.[33] Another source from which Coleridge may have derived the Upanishadic thought, under discussion, is the biography of Apollonius of Tyana which Coleridge had read in William Enfield's *History of Philosophy* (2 Volumes, 1791). Apollonius's life appears in the first volume of Enfield's book and it is this volume that the young poet had borrowed from the Bristol library in March 1795 and had kept for 10 days.[34] He may have read both volumes before taking out J.J. Brucker's *Historia Critica Philosophia* (1766-67) of which Enfield's work was an abridgement. The

poet may have read *The First Two Books of Philostratus, Concerning the Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, translated by Charles Blount (London, 1680) much before he came to lay his hands on Enfield's eminent book. This had definitely led him to read the whole of the original 'Life'. In Book III.xi–xx of the 'Life' the Indian sage Iarchus tells the Greek that the Indian sages are Gods because they know everything and that they know everything precisely because they know themselves, i.e. they realize the impersonal Upaniṣhadic *atman*, the divine within. And Iarchus demonstrates his omniscience by revealing numerous facts regarding the journey of the Greek to India—facts which were impossible to be known to an Indian, living thousands of miles away from the places where those incidents had taken place. I believe that Coleridge was highly fascinated by the conduct and character of the Indian sages exemplified by Iarchus and that the poet aspired to realize their ideal as is clear from the last stanza of his 'Greek Ode on Astronomy'. That Coleridge was fully acquainted with the Greek's experiences in India is clear from his reference to Apollonius of Tyana in his Philosophical Lecture number VII, delivered on the eighth of February 1819. So far as the *Gītā* is concerned, the Hindu scripture supports what the *Māndūkyopaniṣad* affirms and what the sage Iarchus had told Apollonius of Tyana regarding the attainment of godhead by a true sage; this it maintains in Chapter III, Verse 19, Chapter IV, Verse 31 and Chapter XVIII, Verses 54-55.

The famous early lyric of Coleridge entitled 'Eolian Harp', composed 1795, first published 1796, has many ideas which seem to have been derived from the *Gītā*. Lines 26-29 and lines 44-48, containing an early theory of Coleridge that God the creator is not a force acting upon Nature and remaining external to it, but is rather constantly communicating His being to all created objects and infusing His soul into them. The former set of verses from the lyric are in all probability derived from Chapter VII, Verses 8–11 of the Hindu scripture:

रसोऽहमप्सु कौन्तेय प्रभास्मि शशिसूर्ययोः।
प्रणवः सर्ववेदेषु शब्दः खे पौरुषं नृषु।।
पुण्यो गन्धः पृथिव्यां च तेजश्चास्मि विभावसौ।
जीवनं सर्वभूतेषु तपश्चास्मि तपस्विषु।।
बीजं मां सर्वभूतानां विद्धि पार्थ सनातनम्।
बुद्धिर्बुद्धिमतामस्मि तेजस्तेजस्विनामहम्।।
बलं बलवतां चाहं कामरागविवर्जितम्।
धर्माविरुद्धो भूतेषु कामोऽस्मि भरतर्षभ।।

raso'ham apsu kaunteya prabhāsmi śaśi-sūryayoḥ
praṇavaḥ sarvavedeṣu śabdaḥ khe pauruṣam nṛṣu.
puṇyo gandhaḥ pṛthivyāṁ ca tejas cāsmi vibhāvasau
jivanaṁ sarvabhūteṣu tapascāsmi tapasviṣu
bījaṁ mām sarvabhūtānaṁ viddhi pārtha sanātanam
buddhir buddhimatām asmi tejas tejasvinām aham
balaṁ balavatām cāsmi kāmarāgavivarjitam
dharmāviruddho bhūteṣu kamo'smi bharatarṣabha.

Wilkins had rendered these verses into English in the following words:[35]

> I am moisture in the water, light in the sun and the moon, invocation in the Vedas, sound in the firmament, human nature in mankind, sweet-smelling savour in the earth, glory in the source of light; in all things I am life, and I am zeal in the zealous; and know, O Arjoon! that I am the eternal seed of nature. I am understanding of the wise, the glory of the proud, the strength of the strong, free from lust and anger; and in animals I am desire, regulated by moral fitness.

Now, let us take a look at what Coleridge constructed imaginatively out of these words of Lord Krishna in the *Gītā* for the poetic purposes of his 'Eolian Harp':

> O! the one Life within us and abroad
> Which meets all motion and becomes its soul,
> A light in sound, a sound-like power in light,
> Rhythm in all thought, and joyance everywhere.
> (II, 26–9).

Clearly, what the *Gītā* states in so many verses, Coleridge has been able to articulate quite briefly but suggestively in a limited space of only 4 lines. But the basic thought of the two texts—'Eolian Harp' and the *Gītā*, cited above, is the same: namely, the world and all objects thereof are pervaded by God, the Universal Spirit who is not external to Nature but is Nature's driving force, having impregnated her with His seed and pervaded her with His divine presence.

For lines 44-48 of his lyric, Coleridge, I am sure, remains indebted to the *Gītā*, Chapter VII, Verses 4–7. The verses of the Hindu scripture run as follows:

भूमिरापोऽनलो वायुः खं मनो बुद्धिरेव च।
अहंकार इतीयं मे भिन्ना प्रकृतिरष्टधा।।
अपरेयमितस्त्वन्यां प्रकृतिं विद्धि मे पराम्।
जीवभूतां महाबाहो ययेदं धार्यते जगत्।।
एतद्योनीनि भूतानि सर्वाणीत्युपधारय।
अहं कृत्स्नस्य जगतः प्रभवः प्रलयस्तथा।।
मत्तः परतरं नान्यत्किंचिदस्ति धनंजय।
मयि सर्वमिदं प्रोतं सूत्रे मणिगणा इव।।

bhūmir āpo'nalo vāyuḥ kham mano buddhir eva ca
ahankāra itīyam me bhinnā prakṛtir aṣtadhā.
apareyam itas tvanyāṁ prakṛtiṁ viddhi me parām
jivabhutāṁ mahabaho yayedaṁ dhāryate jagat
etad yonīni bhutāni sarvāṇity upadharaya
ahaṁ kṛtsnasya jagataḥ prabhavaḥ pralayastathā.
mattaḥ parataraṁ nānyat kincid asti dhananjaya
mayi sarvam idaṁ protaṁ sūtre maṇi gaṇa iva.

The prose-version of these verses by Wilkins runs as follows:[36]

> My principle is divided into eight distinctions: earth, water, fire, air and ether together with mind, understanding, and ahangkar (self-consciousness): but besides this, know that I have another principle distinct from this, and superior, which is of a vital nature, and by which this world is supported. Learn that these two are the womb of all nature. I am the source of preservation and destruction of the whole universe. There is

not any thing greater than I; and all things hang on me
even as precious gems upon a string.

Lord Krishna expounds to Arjuna the mystical relationship that exists between the undivided universal unity called Soul and the divided multiplicity called *prakṛti* or Nature: both are His own forms—the former is His higher form and the latter His lower form. He pervades everything visible as well as invisible and yet is beyond them all. Coleridge seems to have grasped the full significance of Krishna's words addressed to Arjuna and he expresses the thought underlying the verses of the *Gītā* cited above in the following lines of his poem in a very powerful manner:

And what if all of animated nature
Be but organic Harps diversely framed,
That tremble into thought, as o'er them sweeps
Plastic and vast, one intellectual breeze,
At once the soul of each, and God of all? ('Eolian Harp', II, 44-48).

In one manuscript of the poem, it must be emphasized, the poet had the following 3 extra lines:

Thus, God would be the Universal Soul,
Mechanized matter as the organic harps
And each one's Tubes be that, which each calls I.

Both the sets of lines from the 'Eolian Harp', cited here, articulate the supra-pantheistic philosophy enshrined in the verses of the *Gītā*. They are brief but succinct whereas the verses of the Hindu text are elaborate and diffuse. But the impact of the Hindu text on the lines from the English poem in unmistakable to a sensitive and responsive reader. The clue lies in the fact that the ideas contained in the lines from the 'Eolian Harp' are far removed from the traditional tenets of the Christian faith to which Coleridge as a true Christian subscribed wholeheartedly. In the last stanza of the poem, addressed to his wife Sara (Fricker) at whose reproof of the 'dim and unhallow'd' thoughts, expressed in

the preceding 2 verse-paragraphs, containing 11, 26-29 and 11, 44-48, the poet had to restrain what his friend Charles Lamb called 'wild wanderings' and the poet himself admits to be 'shapings of the unregenerate mind'. The poet's address to Sara as 'meek daughter in the family of Christ' (line 53) makes it amply clear that the thoughts of the 2 passages considered here are un-Christian. The expression 'shapings of the unregenerate mind' leads one to conclude that they are Hindu thoughts, for it was quite normal for the Christians of the day to call Hindus 'unregenerate'. And when the lines from the poem of Coleridge evince close resemblance to the verses of the *Gītā*, cited here, their debts to the Hindu text become undisputed. The extra 3 lines, added to the poem in one of its manuscripts, are clearly a paraphrase of Verses IV and V of the seventh chapter of the *Gītā* in which Lord Krishna describes His 2 natures ('principles' in Wilkins's rendering) called *parā prakṛti* and *aparā prakṛti*. In the word 'Tubes' Coleridge has summed up the constituents of the 8-fold (*aṣṭadhā*) *aparā prakṛti* and the phrase 'which each call I' is nothing but an English translation of what the Hindu scripture calls *ahamkāra* with which the human body is commonly identified. I think this clinches the matter.

Many passages of Coleridge's early dialogue-poem entitled 'Religious Musings' (written on the Christmas Eve of 1794) recall passages from the Upanishads and the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. The forty-fifth line of the poem, namely, 'We and our Father one' is a clear rendering of the Upanishadic assertions: '*Śivo'ham*' (i.e. 'I am Shiva, the Godhead') and '*Aham brahmāsmi*' (i.e. 'I am Brahma, the Supreme Being'). The last 7 lines of the verse-paragraph beginning with the word 'Lovely was the Death' seem to me to be the paraphrase of the twenty-seventh and thirty-fourth verses of the ninth chapter of the *Gītā*. These verses run as follows:

यत्करोषि यदश्नासि यज्जुहोषि ददासि यत्।
यत्तपस्यसि कौन्तेय तत्कुरुष्व मदर्पणम्।।

मन्मना भव मद्भक्तो मद्याजी मां नमस्कुरु।
मामेवैष्यसि युक्त्वैवमात्मानं मत्परायणः।।

yat karoṣi yad aśnasi yajjuhoṣi dadāsi yat
yat tapasyasi kaunteya tat kuruṣva madarpaṇam.
man manā bhava mad-bhakto mad-yājīmām namskuru
mām evaiṣyasi yuktvaivam ātmanam mat parāyaṇah.

Wilkins had rendered these verses in the following manner:[37]

> Whatever thou doest, O Arjoon, whatever thou eatest, whatever thou sacrificest, whatever thou givest, whatever thou shalt be zealous about, make each an offering to me.
>
> Be of my mind, my servant, my adorer, and bow down before me. Unite thy soul, as it were, unto me, make me thy asylum, and thou shalt go unto me.

Krishna is telling Arjuna in these verses that the way to rise out of our self-centred and ego-riveted consciousness to the divine plane is through focusing all energies—intellectual, emotional and volitional—on God, exclusively and absolutely. When this is done, our whole being is transformed and lifted up into the unity and universality of spirit. Coleridge also says precisely the same thing in the 'Religious Musings':

> From Hope and Firmer Faith to perfect Love
> Attracted and absorb'd: and centered there
> God only to behold, and know and feel,
> Till my exclusive consciousness of God
> All self-annihilated it shall make
> God its identity: God all in all
> We and our father one. (lines 39–45).

If the already cited verses from the *Gītā* are not found to be having point to point affinity with the verses from Coleridge's poem, nobody can doubt the proximity of these lines to the following verse from the fourteenth chapter of the Hindu scripture:

मां च योऽव्यभिचारेण भक्तियोगेन सेवते।
स गुणान्समतीत्यैतान्ब्रह्मभूयाय कल्पते।।

mām ca yo'vyabhicāreṇa bhaktiyogena sevate
sa gunān samatītyaitan brahmabhūyāya kalpate.

verse 26

Wilkins's rendering of this verse runs as follows:[38]

> And he, my servant, who serveth me alone with due attention, having overcome the influence of the qualities is formed to be absorbed in Brahma, the Supreme.

Any impartial reader, after reading both the texts, is bound to exclaim with wonder that the verses from the English poem are a marvellous paraphrase of the passage from the *Gītā*.

In point of fact, 'Religious Musings' seems to be an adaptation of the religious and metaphysical speculations of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. The following lines from the poem are, in all probability, based on the sixth chapter of the Hindu scripture, Verses 23-32:

> And blessed are they
> Who in this fleshly world, the elect of Heaven,
> Their strong eye darting thro' the deeds of Men
> Adore with steadfast unpresuming gaze
> Him, Nature's Essence, Mind and Energy
> And gazing, trembling, patiently ascend,
> Treading beneath their feet all visible things
> As steps, that upward to their Father's Throne
> Lead gradual—nor else glorified nor loved,
> They nor contempt imbosom nor Revenge:
> For they dare know of what may seem deform
> The Supreme Fair Sole Operant: in whose sight
> All things are pure, his strong controlling Love
> Alike from all educing perfect good
> Their too celestial courage, inly arm'd—
> Dwarfing Earth's giant brood, what time they muse
> On their great Father, great beyond compare

And marching onwards view high o'er their heads
His waving Banners of Omnipotence
Who the Creator love, created might
Dread not: within their tents no Terrors walk,
For they are Holy things before the Lord
Aye-unprofan'd, tho' Earth should league with Hell!

The above passage gives a very detailed and vivid account of the devotees of God who have unflinching faith and full concentration on the Godhead. This description is quite close to the depiction of the *yogin* who plunges himself heart and soul in the service of the Lord with utmost self-control and absolute trust in the object of his worship. I cite Verses 23–32 of the sixth chapter of the *Gītā*, which, I suspect, were the sources for the thoughts, expressed in the passage from the 'Religious Musings': the description of the *yogin* has been given in Chapter V, Verses 16-29 and Chapter VI, Verses 4-32:

तं विद्याद्दुःखसंयोगवियोगं योगसञ्ज्ञितम्।
स निश्चयेन योक्तव्यो योगोऽनिर्विण्णचेतसा ।। 23 ।।
संकल्पप्रभवान्कामांस्त्युक्त्वा सर्वानशेषतः।
मनसैवेन्द्रियग्रामं विनियम्य समन्ततः ।। 24 ।।
शनैः शनैरुपरमेद् बुद्धया धृतिगृहीतया।
आत्मसंस्थं मनः कृत्वा न किञ्चिदपि चिन्तयेत् ।। 25 ।।
यतो यतो निश्चलति मनश्चंचलमस्थिरम्।

ततस्ततो नियम्यैतदात्मन्येव वशं नयेत् ।। 26 ।।
प्रशान्तमनसं ह्येनं योगिनं सुखमुत्तमम्।
उपैति शान्तरजसं ब्रह्मभूतमकल्मषम् ।। 27 ।।
युञ्जन्नेवं सदात्मानं योगीविगतकल्मषः।
सुखेन ब्रह्मसंस्पर्शमत्यन्तं सुखमश्नुते ।। 28 ।।
सर्वभूतस्थमात्मानं सर्वभूतानि चात्मनि।
ईक्षते योगयुक्तात्मा सर्वत्र समदर्शनः ।। 29 ।।

यो मां पश्यति सर्वत्र सर्वं च मयि पश्यति।
तस्याहं न प्रणश्यामि स च मे न प्रणश्यति ।। 30 ।।
सर्वभूतस्थितं यो मां भजत्येकत्वमास्थितः।
सर्वथा वर्तमानोऽपि स योगी मयि वर्तते ।। 31 ।।
आत्मौपम्येन सर्वत्र समं पश्यति योऽर्जुन।
सुखं वा यदि वा दुःखं स योगी परमोमतः ।। 32 ।।

taṁ vidyād duhkhsaṁyogaviyogaṁ yogasaṁjnitam
sa niścayena yoktavyo yogo'nirviṇṇacetasā.
saṅkalpa-prabhavān kāmāṅstyaktvā sarvān aśeṣataḥ
manasaivendriyagrāmaṁ viniyamya samantataḥ.
śanaiḥ śanair uparamed buddhyā dhṛtigṛhītayā
ātma-samstham manaḥ kṛtva na kincid api cintayet.
yato yato niścalati manas cañcalam asthiram
tatas tato niyamyaitad ātmany eva vaśam nayet
praśāntamanasaṁ hy enaṁ yoginaṁ sukham uttamam
upaiti śāntarajasaṁ brahmabhūtam akalmaṣam.
yunjann evaṁ sadātmānaṁ yogī vigatakalmaṣaḥ
sukhena brahma-saṁsparśam atyantam sukham aśnute.
sarvabhūtastham ātmānaṁ sarvabhūtani cātmani
īkṣate yoga-yuktātmā sarvatra samadarśanaḥ.
yo māṁ paśyati sarvatra sarvaṁ ca mayi paśyati
tasyāhaṁ na praṇaśyāmi sa ca me na praṇaśyati.
sarvabhūtastitaṁ yo māṁ bhajaty ekatvam āsthitaḥ
sarvathā vartamano'pi sa yogi mayi vartate.
ātmaupamyena sarvatra samaṁ paśyati yo'rjuna
sukhaṁ vā yadi va duhkhaṁ sa yogī paramo mataḥ

In Wilkins's version these verses read as follows:[39]

This disunion from the conjunction of pain may be distinguished by the appellation yoga, spiritual union or devotion. It is to be attained by resolution, by the man who knoweth his own mind. When he hath abandoned every desire that ariseth from the imagination, and subdued with his mind every inclination of the senses, he may, by degrees, find rest; and having, by a steady resolution, fixed his mind within himsèlf, he should think of nothing else. Wheresoever the unsteady mind roameth, he should subdue it, bring it back and place it in his own breast. Supreme happiness attendeth the man whose mind is thus at peace; whose carnal affections and passions are thus subdued; who is thus in God, and free from sin. The man who is thus constantly in the exercise of the soul, and free from sin, enjoyeth

eternal happiness, united with Brahma, the Supreme. The man whose mind is endued with this devotion, and looketh on all things alike, beholdeth the Supreme Soul. He who beholdeth me in all things, and beholdeth all things in me, I forsake not him, and he forsaketh not me. The yogee who believeth in all unity, and worshippeth me present in all things, dwelleth in me in all respects, even while he liveth. The man, O Arjoon, who, from what passeth in his breast, whether it be pain or pleasure, beholdeth the same in others, is esteemed a supreme yogee.

Evidently, both texts (i.e. the passage from the 'Religious Musings' and the above verses from the *Gītā*) emphasize the devotee's unflinching and unswerving devotion. Coleridge's poem stresses the importance of 'steadfast, unpresuming gaze' of the devotee in the worship of the Lord and the verses quoted from the *Gītā* imply this. The Hindu text, a little before the verses cited here, clearly states and stresses the same gaze in the thirteenth verse of the sixth chapter and more emphatically in the twenty-seventh verse of the fifth chapter in the expression ' चक्षुश्चैवान्तरे भ्रुवोः ' ('*caksuś caivāntare bhruvoḥ*', i.e. 'with the gaze fixed on the space between the eye-brows'). The whole thought suggested by Coleridge's expression 'steadfast, unpresuming gaze' can be discerned in Verses 13–15 of the sixth chapter of the *Gītā*:

समं कायशिरोग्रीवं धारयन्नचलं स्थिरः।
संप्रेक्ष्य नासिकाग्रं स्वं दिशश्चानवलोकयन्।।
प्रशान्तात्मा विगतभीर्ब्रह्मचारिव्रते स्थितः।
मनः संयम्य मच्चित्तो युक्त आसीत मत्परः।।
युञ्जन्नेवं सदात्मानं योगी नियतमानसः।
शान्तिं निर्वाणपरमां मत्संस्थामधिगच्छति।।

samaṁ kāyaśirogrīvaṁ dhārayannacalaṁ sthiraḥ
samprekṣya nāsikāgraṁ svaṁ diśaś cānavalokayan.
praśāntātmā vigatabhir brahmacārivrate sthitaḥ
manaḥ saṁyamya maccitto yukta āsita matparaḥ.

yunjannevaṁ sadātmānaṁ yogi niyatamānasaḥ
śāntiṁ nirvānaparamāṁ matasaṁsthām adhigacchati.

In Wilkins's version these verses read as follows:[40]

> (There) he ... (should sit), keeping his head, his neck, and body, steady without motion, his eyes fixed on the point of his nose, looking at no other place around. The peaceful soul, released from fear, who would keep in the path of one who followeth God, should restrain the mind, and fixing it on me, depend on me alone. The yogee of an humbled mind, who thus constantly exerciseth his soul, obtaineth happiness incorporeal and supreme in me.

The second line of Verse 13, namely, '*sampreksya nāsikāgram svam diśaś cānavalokayan*' which Wilkins renders by these words: 'his eyes fixed on the point of his nose, looking at no other place around', clearly suggests the idea of the steadfastness of the gaze. So far as the epithet 'unpresuming' as applied to the 'gaze' in Coleridge' poem is concerned, it is based specifically on the expression '*niyatamānasaḥ*' of the fifteenth verse of the Hindu text; Wilkins has rendered it by the phrase: 'of an humbled mind'. What Coleridge implies by the line 'Treading beneath their feet all visible things' has been clearly stated in the twenty-fourth verse of the *Gītā*, beginning with the words: '*sankalpaprabhavān kāmāṁs tyaktvā sarvān aśeṣataḥ*' (i.e. to use Wilkins's words: 'When he hath abandoned every desire that ariseth from the imagination, and subdued with his mind every inclination of the senses'). The idea of graduality that the English poet stresses in the ninth line of his extract from the 'Religious Musings' has been emphasized by the *Gītā* at the beginning of the twenty-fifth verse in the expression '*śanaiḥ śanair uparamet*' which Wilkins translates as 'he may, by degrees, find rest'.

What Coleridge suggests in the lines 9–10 of his extract, that is, 'else nor glorified nor loved,/They nor contempt im-

bosom nor Revenge' has been very clearly stated in the ninth verse of the sixth chapter of the *Gītā*:

सुहृन्मित्रार्युदासीन-मध्यस्थद्वेष्यबन्धुषु।
साधुष्वपि च पापेषु समबुद्धिर्विशिष्यते।।

suhṛnmitrāryudāsina-madhyasthadveṣyabandhuṣu
sādhuṣvapi ca pāpeṣu samabuddhir viśiṣyate.

Wilkins had rendered this verse in the following words:[41]

> The man is distinguished whose resolutions, whether amongst his companions and friends, in the midst of enemies, or those who stand aloof or go between; with those who love and those who hate; in the company of saints or sinners, is the same.

What Coleridge alludes to in the expression 'Earth's giant brood' (line 16 of the extract from his poem), the Hindu scripture calls *indriyagrāma* (VI.24). The thought underlying Coleridge's words: 'within their tents no Terrors walk' has been beautifully articulated by the epithet 'विगतभीः' (*vigatabhīḥ*) by the *Gītā* (VI.14) which Wilkins rendered by the expression 'released from fear.' Coleridge describes God as 'Nature's Essence, Mind and Energy' (line 5 of the extract from his 'Religious Musings'). This is in keeping with Krishna's assertion in the *Gītā* (VII.10): 'बीजं मां सर्वभूतानां विद्धि पार्थ सनातनम्' (*bījam maṁ sarvabhūtanaṁ viddhi pārtha sanātanam*) which Wilkins had rendered thus: 'and know, O Arjoon, that I am the eternal seed of nature.' Similarly, Coleridge's depiction of God as 'great beyond compare' recalls Krishna's proclamation in the *Gītā* (VII.7), namely, 'मत्तः परतरं नान्यत् किंचिदस्ति अस्ति धनञ्जय' (*mattaḥ parataraṁ nānyat kincid asti dhananjaya*), i.e. 'There is nothing greater than I, O Arjoon.' The idea of sincere and true devotees in Coleridge's poem being 'Holy things.../Aye-unprofaned' is clearly identical with the *Gītā*'s characterization of a true *yogin* as *vigatakalmaṣaḥ* (VI.28) which Wilkins translated as 'free from sin'. Likewise, the idea expressed by Coleridge's lines 18–19, namely, 'And marching onwards view high o'er their heads/His waving Banners

of Omnipotence' finds its counterpart in the second line of the fourteenth verse of the sixth chapter of the *Gītā*, '*manaḥ samyamya maccitto yukta āsita matpareḥ*' which Wilkins rendered as 'should restrain the mind, and fixing it on me, depend on me alone'. Thus, the whole passage from the 'Religious Musings' is pervaded by the thoughts and ideas from the Hindu text that had created a great stir throughout Europe on its first appearance in an English translation in England in 1785. In fact, as I have already observed, the entire poem of Coleridge can be interpreted in the light of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. Take the case of the first 6 lines of the verse-paragraph beginning with the words 'Thus from th' Elect, regenerate thro' faith'. I quote the lines concerned:

> Thus from the Elect, regenerate thro' faith,
> Pass the dark Passions and what thirsty Cares
> Drink up the spirit and the dim regards
> Self-centre. Lo! they vanish! or acquire
> New names, new features—by supernal grace
> Enrob'd with Light, and naturaliz'd in heaven.
> As when a shepherd on a vernal morn
> Thro' some thick fog creeps tim'rous with slow foot
> Darling he fixes on the immediate road
> His downward eye: all else of fairest kind
> Hid or deform'd. But lo! the bursting Sun
> Touch'd by the enchantment of that sudden beam,
> Straight the black vapor melteth, and in globes
> Of dewy glitter, gems each plant and tree;
> On every leaf, on every blade it hangs
> Dance glad the new-born intermingling rays
> And wide around the landscape streams the glory...

The central idea and even the basic imagery used in the above passage are, I am sure, derived from Verses 8-11 of the tenth chapter of the *Gītā*. The relevant verses run as follows:

अहं सर्वस्य प्रभवो मत्तः सर्वं प्रवर्तते ।
इति मत्वा भजन्ते मां बुधा भावसमन्विताः ॥ 8 ॥

मच्चित्ता मद्गतप्राणा बोधयन्तः परस्परम्।
कथयन्तश्च मां नित्यं तुष्यन्ति च रमन्ति च।। 9।।
तेषां सततयुक्तानां भजतां प्रीतिपूर्वकम्।
ददामि बुद्धियोगं तं येन मामुपयान्ति ते।। 10।।
तेषामेवानुकम्पार्थमहमज्ञानजं तमः।
नाशयाम्यात्मभावस्थो ज्ञानदीपेन भास्वता।। 11।।

ahaṁ sarvasya prabhavaḥ mattah sarvaṁ pravartate
iti matvā bhajante māṁ budhaḥ bhāvasamanvitāḥ.
maccittā madgataprāṇā bodhayantaḥ parasparam
kathayantaśca māṁ nityaṁ tuṣyanti ca ramanti ca.
teṣaṁ satatayuktānaṁ bhajatāṁ prītipūrvakam
dadāmi buddhiyogaṁ taṁ yen mam upayānti te
teṣām evānukampārtham aham ajñanajam tamaḥ
nāśayāmy ātmabhāvastho jñanadīpena bhāsvatā.

Wilkins rendered these verses thus:[42]

> I am the creator of all things, and all things proceed from me. Those who are endued with spiritual wisdom, believe this and worship me: their very hearts and minds are in me; they rejoice amongst themselves, and delight in speaking of my name, and teaching one another my doctrine. I gladly inspire those, who are constantly employed in my service, with that use of reason, by which they come unto me; and, in compassion, I stand in my own nature, and dissipate the darkness of their ignorance with the light of the lamp of wisdom.

The *Gītā* demonstrates the truth of the Lord's words, stated in the above verses through what happens to Arjuna who at the end of the work confesses in the seventy-third verse of its eighteenth chapter:

नष्टो मोहः स्मृतिर्लब्धा त्वत्प्रसादान्मयाच्युत।
स्थितोऽस्मि गतसन्देहः करिष्ये वचनं तव।।

naṣṭo mohaḥ smṛtir labdhā tvatprasādāt mayācyuta
sthito'smi gatasandehaḥ kariṣye vacanaṁ tava.

That is to say: 'By thy divine favour, my confusion of mind is lost, and I have found understanding. I am now fixed in my

principles, and am freed from all doubt; and I will henceforth act according to thy words.'[43]

Both texts—the quotation from the 'Religious Musings' and the verses from the tenth chapter of the *Gītā* highlight the wonders wrought by the grace of wisdom bestowed by the Lord on His true devotees in precisely identical terms. Coleridge's text is more graphic owing to the use of a Homeric simile, I admit, but his central thought has undoubtedly been derived from the *Gītā*. What *Gītā* calls 'अज्ञानज तमः' (*ajnānajaṁ tamaḥ*) Coleridge calls 'dark Passions' and 'thirsty Cares'—Wilkins had translated the Sanskrit term by the beautiful expression 'the darkness of their ignorance'. The new names and the new features that the dark Passions and thirsty Cares assume in Coleridge are what the Hindu text calls '*buddhi-yoga*' or as Wilkins translated the term 'the use of reason'. And those whom Coleridge designates as 'the Elect, regenerate thr' faith', the *Gītā* calls '*budhā bhāvasamanvitāḥ*' or 'those who are endued with spiritual wisdom' as Wilkins rendered the Sanskrit expression.

The following lines from the same verse-paragraph, 2 lines after the lines given here from the 'Religious Musings':

> But 'tis God
> Diffus'd thro' all, that doth make all one whole;

are evidently based on the following line of the fourth verse of the ninth chapter of the *Gītā*:

> मया ततमिदं सर्वं जगदव्यक्तमूर्तिना
>
> *mayā tatam idaṁ sarvaṁ jagadavyaktamūrtinā*

which Wilkins had rendered thus:

> This whole world was spread by me in my invisible form.

Let us now discuss the impact of the *Gītā* on other poems of the poet. The following 2 stanzas of the greatest poem of Coleridge, namely, 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' (1798), occurring at the close of the poem:

Farewell, farewell! but this I tell
To thee, thou Wedding-Guest
He prayeth well, who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast.

He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all.

are, I suspect, based on the eighteenth and twenty-fifth verses of the fifth chapter of the *Gītā*:

विद्याविनयसंपन्ने ब्राह्मणे गवि हस्तिनि।
शुनि चैव श्वपाके च पण्डिताः समदर्शिनः॥ 18॥
लभन्ते ब्रह्मनिर्वाणमृषयः क्षीणकल्मषाः।
छिन्नद्वैधा यतात्मानः सर्वभूतहिते रताः॥ 25॥

vidyā-vinaya-sampanne brāhmaṇe gavi hastini
śuni caiva śvapāke ca panditāḥ samadarśinaḥ. [18]
labhante brahmanirvāṇaṁ ṛṣayaḥ kṣīṇakalmaṣāḥ
chinnadvaidhā yatātmānaḥ sarvabhūta-hite-ratāḥ.[25]

Wilkins had rendered these verses in the following manner:[44]

The learned behold Him alike in the reverend Brahman perfected in knowledge, in the ox, and the elephant; in the dog, and in him who eateth of the flesh of dogs.

Such Rĕĕshĕĕs as are purified from their offences, freed from doubt, of subdued minds, and interested in the good of all mankind, obtain the incorporeal Brahm.

According to the Hindu text the achievement of '*Brahmanirvāṇa*' is the highest state and this is achieved by the realization of the principle of unity governing the entire universe and by the loving regard for all beings both great and small alike. Coleridge, too, emphasizes the significance of indiscriminate loving regard for all creation in the worship to the Almighty. So far as God's love for all beings, irrespective of their being great and small, is concerned, the thought seems

to have been derived from the last verse of the fifth chapter of the *Gītā*:

भोक्तारं यज्ञतपसां सर्वलोकमहेश्वरम्।
सुहृदं सर्वभूतानां ज्ञात्वा मां शान्तिमृच्छति।। 29।।

bhoktāraṁ yajña-tapaṣāṁ sarvalokamaheśvaram
suhṛdaṁ sarvabhūtānāṁ jñātva māṁ śantim ṛcchati.

In Wilkins's English prose the verse reads as follows:[45]

> ; and, (the true devotee) being convinced that I am the cherisher of religious zeal, the lord of all worlds, and *the friend of all nature*, he shall obtain me and be blessed (emphasis added).

This last verse of the fifth chapter of the Hindu scripture clearly states that those who regard God as the maker and lord of all the worlds and the friend of all beings—*suhṛdam sarvabhūtānām*—are the best lovers and devotees of God and it is precisely this very idea that Coleridge seeks to stress in the most controversial stanza of his greatest poem.

The following lines from Coleridge's conversation-poem entitled 'Frost at Midnight', like the stanzas from the 'Rime of Ancient Mariner' cited earlier, contain the *Gītā*'s view regarding God:

> : so shalt thou see and hear
> The lovely shapes and sounds intelligible
> Of that eternal language, which thy God
> Utters, who from eternity doth teach
> Himself in all, and all things in Himself.
> Great universal Teacher! he shall mould
> Thy spirit, and by giving make it ask (lines 58–64).

The underlying thought of this passage is clearly derived from the tenth chapter of the *Gītā* called 'विभूतियोग' ('*vibhūtiyoga*') because in this chapter Lord Krishna says that He pervades the entire universe but the lovely shapes and sounds of the world reveal His glory which is endless; the entire chapter is devoted to a vivid depiction of the various

manifestations of the Lord in the forms of objects most excellent of their kinds. In Verse 39 of the chapter, the Lord says:

यच्चापि सर्वभूतानां बीजं तदहमर्जुन।
न तदस्ति विना यत्स्यान्मया भूतं चराचरम्।।

yaccāpi sarvabhūtānaṁ bījaṁ tad aham arjuna
na tad asti vinā yat syān mayā bhūtaṁ carācaram.

Wilkins's version of the verse runs thus:[46]

> I am, in like manner, O Arjoon, that which is the seed of all things in nature; and there is not anything, whether animate or inanimate, that is without me.

Clearly, all the lovely and excellent objects of Nature are the media through which the Lord reveals or manifests Himself most prominently, though He pervades the entire universe and has penetrated deeply the hearts of all. So far as Coleridge's exression 'Great universal Teacher', used for God, is concerned, it is, in all probability, taken from the forty-third verse of the eleventh chapter of the *Gītā*:

पितासि लोकस्य चराचरस्य
त्वमस्य पूज्यश्च गुरुर्गरीयान्।
न त्वत्समोऽस्त्यभ्यधिकः कुतोऽन्यो
लोकत्रयेऽप्यप्रतिमप्रभाव!।।

pitāsi lokasya carācarasya
tvamasya pūjyaś ca gurur garīyān
na tvat samo'sty abhyadhikaḥ kuto'nyo
lokatraye'py apratima-prabhāva!

Wilkins had done this verse into English as follows:

> Thou art the father of all things animate and inanimate. Thou art the sage instructor of the whole, worthy to be adored! There is none like unto thee; where then, in the three worlds, is there one above thee?

The Sanskrit expresion *gurur garīyān* which Wilkins rendered by the term 'sage instructor' was, it seems to me, transformed into a happier and grander expression 'Great universal Teacher' by Coleridge.

The fourth stanza of the most famous ode by Coleridge, called 'Dejection: An Ode' (composed and published in 1802) is thoroughly Upanishadic both in letter and spirit and also has its roots in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. Let me first quote the stanza:

O Lady! we receive but what we give,
And in our life alone does Nature live:
Ours is her wedding garment, ours her shroud
And would we aught behold, of higher worth,
Than that inanimate cold world allowed
To the poor loveless ever-anxious crowd,
Ah! from the soul itself must issue forth
A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud
Enveloping the Earth— And from the soul itself must there be sent
A sweet and potent voice, of its own birth,
Of all sweet sounds the life and element!

In the stanza from the 'Ode' quoted here, 3 ultimate realities have been recognized—the body, Nature and the Soul or Universal Spirit. The *Gītā*, too, acknowledges these 3 realities called *Puruṣa*, *Prakṛti* and *Brahma*; the same realities have also been designated as *Kṣetrajna*, *Kṣetra* and *Paramātma* and in yet another set, as *Kṣara*, *Akṣara* and *Uttama Puruṣa*. The Hindu text discusses these terms at great length in its thirteenth and fifteenth chapters. What Coleridge calls 'we' is none other than *Gītā*'s *Puruṣa*, *Akṣara* or *Kṣhetrajna*; his Nature is *Gītā*'s *Prakṛti*, *Kṣara* or *Kṣetra*. In Coleridge's poem Nature has been described as not very dissimilar to 'we'; a near-identity has been established between the two. The *Gītā*, too, describes them in similar terms; in the twentieth verse of its thirteenth chapter the relationship between the two has been established in the following words:

कार्यकारणकर्तृत्वे हेतुः प्रकृतिरुच्यते।
पुरुषः सुखदुःखानां भोक्तृत्वे हेतुरुच्यते॥

kārya-kāraṇa-kartṛtve hetuḥ prakṛtir ucyate
puruṣaḥ sukha-duhkhānām bhoktṛtve hetur ucyate.

Wilkins's rendering of the verse runs as follows:[47]

> Prakeetee is that principle which operateth in the agency of the instrumental cause of action. Pooroosh is that Hetoo or principle which operateth in the sensation of pain and pleasure.

Thus, *Prakṛti* or Nature cannot be distinguished from our psycho-physical selves; the two are dependent on each other—whatever the individual does or experiences is all due to the 3 *guṇas* which constitute *Prakṛti* and determine the mental, moral and physical dispositions of the individuals. The *triguṇa* theory of the *Gītā* alone can provide a satisfactory explanation of Coleridge's statement, namely, 'we receive but what we give,/And in our life alone does Nature live.' The lines clearly imply that whatever lot has been given us is the direct result of our deeds and all our deeds are determined by the *guṇas* of Nature. Even our births are determined by our *guṇas* which come from Nature. In this way if the *guṇas* are responsible for all that we do and feel and if *guṇas* constitute *Prakṛti*, then Coleridge's line: 'And in our life alone does Nature live' becomes meaningful. But above everything in the universe, according to *Bhagavad-Gītā*, is '*Paramātmā*' or '*Brahma*' who is no other than the Soul, dwelling in the hearts of all beings. If we want to make our lives really significant and meaningful, then we must realize this Godhead dwelling in our hearts. Once this is done whether through *dhyāna*, *karma* or *jnāna*, we are bound to have everlasting joy and bliss called '*Brahmanirvāṇa*'. This is what Coleridge means by the following lines:

> And would we aught behold, of higher worth,
> Than that inanimate cold world allowed
> To the poor loveless ever-anxious crowd,
> Ah! from the soul itself must issue forth
> A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud
> Enveloping the Earth.

Joy of which Coleridge is talking here is what Hindus call '*Ānanda*' or '*Brahmānanda*' and it is to be produced by the

soul out of itself. Coleridge's statement that this highly desirable 'joy' 'from the soul itself must issue forth' is well-rooted in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* 6.5:

उद्धरेदात्मनात्मानं नात्मानमवसादयेत्।
आत्मैव ह्यात्मनो बन्धुरात्मैव रिपुरात्मनः।।

uddhared ātmanātmānaṁ nātmānam avasādayet
ātmaiva hyātmano bandhur ātmaiva ripur ātmanaḥ.

Wilkins's rendering of the verse runs as follows:[48]

> He (i.e. the sanyasin) should raise himself by himself: he should not suffer his soul to be depressed. Self is the friend of self; and, in like manner, self is its own enemy.

Dr Radhakrishnan's comments on this verse are very helpful; with a view to bringing out the true meaning of the verse, he says:[49]

> The Supreme is within us. It is the consciousness underlying the ordinary individualized consciousness of every-day life but incommensurable with it. The two are different in kind, though the Supreme is realizable by one who is prepared to lose his life in order to save it. For the most part we are unaware of the Self in us because our attention is engaged by objects which we like or dislike. We must get away from them, to become aware of the Divine in us. If we do not realize the pointlessness, the irrelevance and the squalor of our ordinary life, the true Self becomes the enemy of our ordinary life. The Universal Self and the personal self are not antagonistic to each other. The Universal Self can be the friend or the foe of the personal self. If we subdue our petty cravings and desires, if we do not exert our selfish will, we become the channel of the Universal Self. If our impulses are under control and if our personal self offers itself to the Universal Self, then the latter becomes our guide and teacher. Every one of us has the freedom to rise or fall and our future is in our own hands.

By the word 'Soul' Coleridge doubtlessly means the Godhead within; this is clear from his description of the object of the verb 'issue forth', that is, 'A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud, *Enveloping the Earth*'. (emphasis mine) The personal self cannot produce a light, enveloping the earth; only the Universal Self can produce this—the Self that dwells within us and pervades the entire universe. The perception of the light, enveloping the earth, can come to a person who contemplates the Universal Self residing in his heart with unflinching faith and complete devotion and is not Nature-bound but rather transcends Nature and her *guṇas*, i.e. becomes wholly God-oriented and God-engrossed. Verses 8-9 of the eighth chapter of the *Gītā* clearly state that the devotee, who meditates on the Supreme Soul constantly, attains the supremely effulgent divine light whose form is beyond conception but resplendent like the sun. Similarly, in the fifteenth verse of the sixth chapter of the work, mention has been made of the supreme *nirvāṇa* (everlasting peace) which descends on the devotee, meditating on the Soul.

That in the 'Ode' Coleridge was concerned with religious and spiritual problems rather than purely aesthetic as is often believed to be, becomes clear from the poem's argument of Stanza V where the purity of the heart has been described as a prerequisite of joy:

> Joy, virtuous Lady! Joy that ne'er was given
> Save to the pure, and in their purest hour! (lines 64-65).

This passage seems to be a paraphrase of the twenty-fifth verse of the fifth chapter of the *Gītā*:

> लभन्ते ब्रह्मनिर्वाणमृषयः क्षीणकल्मषाः।
> छिन्नद्वैधयतात्मानः सर्वभूतहिते रताः॥

> *labhante brahmanirvānaṁ ṛsayaḥ kṣīṇakalmaṣāḥ*
> *ccinnadvaidhā yatātmānaḥ sarvabhūtahite ratāḥ.*

Wilkins had rendered this verse into English in the following words:[50]

> Such Reeshees as are purified from their offences, free from doubt, of subdued minds, and interested in the good of all mankind, obtain the incorporeal Brahm.

Place the Sanskrit expression *Brahmanirvānam* (which Wilkins rendered by the English phrase 'incorporeal Brahm') where Coleridge has used 'Joy', the two passages become almost identical. Indeed, the poet's description of Joy in the following lines is very close to the account of *Brahmanirvāna* in the *Gītā*:

> Joy, Lady! is the spirit and the power,
> Which, wedding Nature to us, gives in dower
> A new Earth and new Heaven,
> Undreamt of by the sensual and the proud—
> Joy is the sweet voice, Joy the luminous cloud—
> We in ourselves rejoice!

In the seventeenth verse of the *Gītā* (XIII) we come across the fullest account of the God-consciousness called Brahma:

> ज्योतिषामपि तज्ज्योतिस्तमसः परमुच्यते।
> ज्ञानं ज्ञेयं ज्ञानगम्यं हृदि सर्वस्य विस्थितम्।।
>
> *jyotiṣamapi tajjyotis tamasaḥ param ucyate*
> *jñānaṁ jneyaṁ jñānagamyaṁ hṛidi sarvasya visthitam.*

Wilkins's version of this verse runs as follows:[51]

> It (i.e. Brahma) is the light of lights, and it is declared to be free from darkness. It is wisdom, that which is the object of wisdom; and it presideth in every breast.

It is clear from Wilkins's rendering that the attributes of Brahma as given in the verse of the *Gītā* are substantially identical with the attributes of 'Joy' as provided in Coleridge's verse; the idea of 'A new Earth and new Heaven' is subsumed in *Gītā*'s expression '*Jyotiṣāmapi tajjyotis*' which Wilkins rendered by 'the light of lights' (i.e. a light not to be found anywhere else in the universe). *Brahmānubhūti*, *Brahmasamsparśa* or *Brahmanirvāna* is indeed a synonym of 'Joy'

or *Ānanda* because Brahma is *Saccidānandasvarūpa*—the embodiment of Truth, Consciousness and Joy. So far as Coleridge's line: 'Which wedding nature of us, gives in dower' is concerned, the meaning is that 'Joy' is the product of a child-like sensibility; it is the dowry that Nature brings with her when she weds the human soul. This is in keeping with the thought of *Chandogya Upanishad* (8.4.3) which declares: 'But only they who find that Brahma-world through the chaste life of a student of sacred knowledge (*brahmacarya*)—only they possess that Brahma-world.'[52]

From this discussion of some of the most significant passages in the poetry of Coleridge, it becomes quite evident that the underlying thoughts of those passages are basically Hindu thoughts, derived from the most popular religious text of the Hindus, namely, the *Bhagavad-Gītā* which the poet had read very avidly and seriously in its English translation by Charles Wilkins as is clear from his quotation from it in one of his philosophical lectures. This aspect of Coleridge studies has gone unnoticed and uncared for but needs to be highlighted. The fact is that India was a very significant part of Coleridge's imagination; she was, in no way, less important than Germany or any other European country except his own motherland. What I have put forward here is just a prelude to further researches in the area which are likely to throw more light on the subject and reveal still more startling facts regarding Coleridge's relationship with India and her culture. It must be borne in mind that one of Coleridge's several brothers, namely, Frank, was an employee in the British East India Company and this brother may have been responsible for the poet's deep interest in India just as his friend Wordsworth's interest, I think, had been deepened by his brother's assocation with India for his brother John was in the employment of the British East India Company and had spent many years in India. In any event, Coleridge's relationship with India was very ardent and profound, the measure of which is his coinage of the word 'Adwaitmist' (i.e. '*Advaitavadin*') for the Dutch philosopher Spinoza—he had used

this word in the margin of Dubois's *Hindu Manners* that he had borrowed from the Bristol library.[53]

Notes and References

1. See the essay 'Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago' in the *Essays of Elia* (1823). For easy reference see *Romantic Poetry and Prose* edited by Harold Bloom and Lionel Trilling, Oxford University Press, New York, London, Toronto, 1973, p. 668.

2.&3. J.L. Lowes, *The Road to Xanadu*, Boston & New York, 1927; revised edition 1930. See the 'Preface'. However, Lane Cooper challenges ths assumption of Lowes in his article entitled 'Coleridge, Wordsworth and Mrs Lowes', *PMLA* XLIII (1928), pp. 584-85.

4. J.H. Muirhead, *Coleridge As Philosopher*, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., New York. The Humanities Press, INC; first published 1930; second impression, 1954; Appendix C: Brahminism (p. 267ff). The extract incorporated in the Appendix is from Coleridge's Manuscript preserved in Henry E. Huntington Library.

5. Charles Wilkins, *Bhagavat-Geeta or Dialogues of Kreeshna and Arjoon*, The Strand, London, 1785; published under the authority of the court of Directors of the East India Company, p. 145.

6. See the *Philosophical Lectures of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* edited by Kathleen Coburn, Pilot Press Ltd., London, 1949, pp. 127-29.

7. Ibid., pp. 109-10.

8. Ibid., p. 404 (*n.* 53).

9. The work of Coleridge called *Table Talk* is a collection of his stray thoughts on innumerable subjects, made on various occasions, collected and edited by the poet's nephew—Henry Nelson Coleridge.

10. Kathleen Coburn, *Philosophical Lectures of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, op. cit., p. 154 (Lecture No. 4).

11. Ibid., pp. 410-11; see Miss Coburn's note on Coleridge's reference to 'Calanos' in which the editor cites the authority of Plutarch's 'Life of Alexander' (Life No. LXV).

12. Cited by John Drew in his *India and the Romantic Imagination*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, Oxford, New York,

1987, p. 185. The citation is from *The Friend*, edited by H.N. Coleridge, 4th edition; 3 vols., London, 1850, II, p. 245.

13. This poetic effusion of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832) is well-known; it is to be found in the poet's *Divan*. That Goethe's response to Kalidasa's play was genuine and heart-felt is clear from his observation that East and West could no longer be separated: 'Wer sich selbst und andere kennt, wird auch hier erkennen: Orient und Okzident sind nicht mehr zu trennen.' This observation of Goethe has been quoted in W. Leifer, *Indians and Germans: 500 Years of Indo-German Contacts*, Bombay, 1971, p. 155.

14. This observation is attributed to J.G. Herder (Johann Gottfried von Herder, 1744–1803), the author of 'Thoughts of Some Brahmins' (1792) in which representative stanzas of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* and those of Bhartṛhari and *Hitopadesha* appear in free translation.

15.&16. All the German thinkers and writers listed here were admirers of Indian culture, religious beliefs and literature. The greatest thinker of Germany and of Europe as a whole was Immanuel Kant, the founder of critical idealism (1724–1804). His deep interest in Indian philosophy and religion is contained in his *Dictation Text*, which is a collection of his various random thoughts, based on his lectures on Geography; it was prepared by Kant's friend F.Th. Rink and it had appeared in 1802 under the title 'Immanuel Kant's Physical Geography' in 1802. Some of the missing pages of this book dealt with India. After a very long research and study Helmuth Glasenapp restored those missing pages in 1944 and published them in 1954 under the title *Kant und die Religionen de Ostens*. A little later Glasenapp came out with his book *Das Indienbild Deutscer Denker*. This work was published by K.F. Koeler Verlag, struttgart, Eberhardstr-10, Tuebingen. The Indian scholar S. Ambike has translated Glasenapp's significant work under the title *India As Seen by German Philosophers* and the Indian Council For Cultural Relations, New Delhi, has published it for the benefit of all concerned (1973). Chapter I of Glasenapp's book deals with Kant at great length in which Kant's text relating to India has been cited.

16. So far as Friedrich Wilhelm Joeseph von Schelling (1775–

1854) is concerned, his interest in India is revealed in his complaint against the preponderence of his country's glorification of the wisdom and literature of India (see note 12 above). Goethe's appreciation of Kālidāsa's '*Abhijnānashākuntalam*' as revealed in his eulogy, cited above, is symptomatic of his being well-acquainted with the Indian lore. So far as Schlegel-brothers are concerned, one of the 5 sons of Johann Adolf Schlegel (1721–93), namely, Karl August Schlegel (1761–89) became an army-officer and died in the service of the East India Company. (See Hans Eichner, *Friedrich Schlegel*, Twayne Publishers, INC., New York, 1970, p. 13.) The youngest of these 5 sons—Carl Friedrich August Schlegel (1772–1829) had published a very important book on Indian literature and philosophy in 1808 entitled *Uber die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier* (On the Language and Wisdom of India). Later, it formed part of his grand work *History of Literature* (1815) which has been acclaimed as 'a great national possession of Germany'. Prince Metternich was the fountainhead of inspiration behind this book and therefore it was fittingly dedicated to him. Henry G. Bohn translated it into English and the Standard Library, London, published Bohn's translation in 1859. John Gibson Lockhart (1794–1854), the editor of the *Quarterly Review*, it must be remembered, had made an abridged translation of Schlegel's work. But Carl Friedrich August Schlegel's elder brother—August Wilhelm von Schlegel (1767–1845)—was the greatest of the Schlegel brothers who, by means of his criticism and poetry, wielded a very great influence on European literature. Coleridge was highly influenced by him. A.W. von Schlegel is known for his grand translation of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* into Latin in the year 1823. He was also the author of a book on Indian philology entitled *Ueber den gegenwartigen Zustand der Indischen Philologie* (1819). The full title of his Latin translation of the Hindu scripture is: *Bhagavad-Gita, id est Thespesion Melos sive Almi Chrisnae et Arjunae Colloquium de Rebus Divinis, Bharateae Episodium*. A.W. von Schlegel also contributed a very scholarly article on the *Bhagavad-Gītā* entitled 'Observations sur la Critique BG', which appeared in *Journal Asiatique*, 9 (1826), 3–27. About Schlegel's Latin translation of *Bhagavad-Gītā* remarks Wil-

helm von Humboldt, himself a *Gītā*-scholar: 'This translation is so masterly and at the same time so conscientious and faithful, it treats so intelligently the philosophical content of the poem, and in such good Latin besides, that it would be a great pity if it were used only for a better understanding of the text, and not read for its own sake as well, by all those who are interested in philosophy and archaeology.' These remarks of Humboldt are quoted by Marianne Cowen in her admirable work *Humanist without Portfolio*, New York, 1963, p. 175. Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744–1803), apart from his 'Thoughts of Some Brahmins' (see Note 14 above) also dealt with Indian philosophy and religion in his *magnum opus*, namely, *Ideen Zur Philosophie der Geschidte* ('Thoughts on the Philosophy of History', 1784–91). All the German thinkers listed here had influenced Coleridge as references to them in his works clearly prove, especially in *Biographia Literaria*. A passage from Herder has been quoted in Chapter XI along with other details of the life of the German thinker; Goethe has been quoted in Chapter XXVI and Schelling in Chapter IX. Schlegel (i.e. A.W. Schlegel) has been mentioned in Chapter II in a footnote on 'Mr Pope' (see the last line of the note); again Schlegel and his dramatic lectures have been alluded to in Chapter IX. Kant has been mentioned in several place in Chapter IX—both in the list of points to be discussed in the chapter, given at the very outset as well as in the body of the text of the chapter.

17. Kathleen Coburn, *The Philosophical Lectures of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, op. cit., pp. 98-99.
18. *Biographia Literaria* edited by George Watson, Everyman's Library, Dent: London and Melbourne, first published 1965; 1975 edition, p. ??.
19. Ibid., p. 77.
20. Kathleen Coburn, *Philosophhical Lectures of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, op. cit., p. 296. Coleridge is here discussing the spiritual powers claimed by the neo-Plantonist after the death of the master (i.e. Plotinus). Coleridge observes: There was (*no limitation*) allowed of, no boundary to the human intellect. It allowed, indeed, most fully, that many were the truths which could not be arrived at either by the senses or by the understanding, or even by the reason as far as it was human.

But what then? There were mysteries: powers higher than those means, by which they could be united positively with the Deity, and live in him, and in that state partake at once of his omniscience and omnipresence. And these, too, were to be learned; the discipline indeed was severe, the time required in the penances and the watchfulness were perfectly like those of ... or the Brahmins; but still the wished for results attached.

The missing word before the expression 'or the Brahmins', in all probability, is 'Samaneans' (i.e. 'Shramanas' belonging to Buddhism).

21. Abbey Dubois (b. 1770) had fled France from the horrors of the Revolution there after being ordained in the diocese of Viviers at the age of 27 and taken shelter in Pondicherry in 1792. Lord William Bentick had purchased the manuscript of Dubois's *Hindu Manners* for 2000 star pagodas (i.e. Rs 8,000 only) and the manuscript was sent to London for being translated from the French original and publication. It was after a lapse of 9 long years that an English translation appeared in London in 1816 at the cost of the East India Company under the supervision of Major Wilks who had drawn the attention of the Government of Fort St. George to the manuscript of Dubois. Coleridge had read the *Hindu Manners* very thoroughly; his borrowings from Bristol library prove this—see note 23 below.
22. John Thelwall was a priest and friend of Coleridge and he was in correspodence with the poet. For the quotation from the letter concerned see *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, edited by E.L. Griggs, 6 vols., Oxford, 1956-57, Vol. I (1785–1800), letter No. 209, p. 350.
23. See John Drew, *India and the Romantic Imagination*, op. cit., p. 191, note no. 26. For a detailed account of Coleridge's borrowings from Bristol Library, see Whalley, 'The Bristol Borrowings of Southey and Coleridge, 1793-98', *The Library*, 5th Series, IV (1949), pp. 114-32, especially p. 122 on the present point.
24. J.L. Lowes, *The Road to Xenadu*, op. cit., pp. 33-34 and pp. 379-84.
25. E.L. Griggs, *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, op. cit., Vol. I, Letter No. 152, p. 252.

26. J.L. Lowes, *The Road to Xenadu*, op. cit., p. 34. (See note 24).
27. All the quotations from Charles Wilkins's English prose translation of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* are from *Bhagavat-Geeta: Or Dialogues Between Krishna and Arjoon*, London, 1785. The present quotation is to be found on p. 37 of the book. Hence onward the work will be referred to as *BGW*.
28. *BGW*, p. 51.
29. Ibid., p. 67.
30. J.B. Beer, *Coleridge the Visionary*, London, 1959, p. 175.
31. Ibid., p. 74.
32. See Robert Ernest Hume, trans. and ed. *The Thirteen Principal Upanishads*, Oxford University Press, 1971; second edition, 1931, p. 377.
33. *Asiatic Researches*, Vols. I-XI, London rpt., 1799-1812. The essay concerned was actually the Eleventh Anniversary Discourse that Jones had delivered on the 20 February 1794 and can be conveniently found in *The Works of William Jones with the Life of the Author*, collected and edited by Lord Teignmouth, 13 Volumes, Vol. III, London, 1807, pp. 229-52.
34. See on this point, John Drew, *India and the Romantic Imagination*, op. cit., p. 186.
35. *BGW*, p. 70.
36. Ibid., pp. 69-70.
37. Ibid., p. 81.
38. Ibid., p. 110.
39. Ibid., pp. 65-66.
40. Ibid., pp. 63-64.
41. Ibid., p. 63.
42. Ibid., p. 84.
43. Ibid., p. 134.
44. Ibid., pp. 59 and 60, respectively.
45. Ibid., p. 61.
46. Ibid., pp. 87-88.
47. Ibid., p. 104.
48. Ibid., p. 62.
49. S. Radhakrishnan, *Bhagavadgītā* with an Introduction, Sanskrit Text, English translation and notes, Blackie & Sons., 1974; first published in Great Britain by George Allen & Unwin Ltd. in 1948, pp. 189-90.

50. *BGW*, p. 60.
51. Ibid., p. 103.
52. Robert Ernest Hume, *The Thirteen Principal Upanishads*, op. cit., p. 266.
53. See Note 21 above for the details of Dubois's *Hindu Manners*. For Coleridge's designation of Spinoza as 'the sternest and most consistent of Adwitamists (i.e. Advaitins)' see the British Library Copy of Dubois's *Description of the Character, Manners and Customs of the People of India*, trans. unnamed, London, 1817, pp. 323-24. See John Drew, *India and the Romantic Imagination*, op. cit., p. 189, (*n.* 10).

Robert Southey and the *Bhagavad-Gītā*

Today, Robert Southey (1774–1843) as a poet, has fallen into disgrace but in his own day he was undoubtedly very popular. The extent of his popularity can be guaged from the fact that he remained Poet Laureate of Great Britain from 1813 unto his death in 1843, serving 3 sovereigns—George III, William IV and Queen Victoria. The poet wielded a very profound influence on the younger poets of the day, the most notable of whom was P.B. Shelley as is borne out by the fact that the younger poet had paid a visit to his older compatriot with the intention of paying his homage to his senior at the latter's residence in Keswick in the year 1811.[1] Southey's Indian epic *The Curse of Kehama* had fascinated Shelley so powerfully that he used to recommend the work to his friends and close relatives.[2]

Southey was the most widely read of the English Romantic poets, even more widely than S.T. Coleridge who claimed that he had read almost everything in print.[3] We agree that Southey's reading was not as deep as that of his brother-in-law, but we must admit the fact that he had collected a very rich library and had read all the books stored therein. His letter to his old comrade—Bedford—is an unignorable proof of this. Southey says in this letter quite exultingly:[4]

> It would please you to see such a display of wealth, which is at once the pride of my eye, and the joy of my heart, and the food of my mind, indeed, more than metaphorically, meat, drink and clothes for me and mine. I verily believe that no one in my station was

ever so rich before, and I am very sure that no one in any station had ever a more thorough enjoyment of riches of any kind or in any way.

So far as India is concerned, Southey had read, it seems, all the work of almost all the significant Orientalists—English, French, German, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese. It is again very interesting that unlike Coleridge and Wordsworth, Southey always acknowledged the sources of his thoughts and images in the footnotes to his poems for the benefit of his readers. In this respect he can be credited with having anticipated the practice of T.S. Eliot who provided notes to his epoch-making poem *The Waste Land*. But Southey's notes are longer and sometimes quite verbose; he does not just mention the sources; he quotes all the details of his borrowings.

India had a great fascination for Southey from the very beginning of his literary career. In fact, he had planned to visit India as he once told his friend—William Taylor of Norwich.[5] He had, it seems, acquired for this very purpose some knowledge of the Sanskrit language. This is evident from his observation on the word 'Gangā' which he says 'is derived from the root "gum" signifying motion.'[6] Similarly, in reference to the Hindu concept of the different ages (*Kṛta* or *Satya*, *Tretā*, *Dvāpāra* and *Kali*), he has the following remark which supplies further proof of his knowledge of Sanskrit:[7]

> The Hindoos call a child 'Bala' till it attains the age of fifteen years old. From the sixteenth year to the fiftieth 'youna' or the state of youth is supposed to continue.

In the above quotation Southey has used 2 Sanskrit words '*Bāla*' and '*youna*' (i.e. *Yauvana*). This is quite interesting indeed. No other English Romantic poet displays in his writings this type of close acquaintance with Sanskrit. Coleridge once characterized Spinoza as an 'Adwaitmist';[8] evidently what he was trying to state was '*Advaitin*' but he could not use the word correctly. Another English poet, P.B. Shelley, who was, to a large degree, Southey's disciple, did use a

correct Sanskrit name of the Indian flower called 'Champā'—'*Champaka*' in his beautiful lyric 'The Indian Serenade'. But Southey's knowledge of the Sanskrit language seems to be quite deep as his explication of the word 'Gangā', given here, makes crystal-clear.

Southey is famous for his narrative poems, dealing with the various mythologies of the world—Arabia, Spain, Wales, America, and India. However, his poem pertaining to Hindu mythology entitled *The Curse of Kehama* is undoubtedly the best of these. Southey regarded it as his favourite product.[9] I would like to describe the poem as the storehouse of Southey's vast knowledge of India: Hindu mythology, Hindu philosophy and Hindu manners. The footnotes to the poem, likewise constitute a virtual encyclopaedia of Hindu mythology and Hindu thought.

It was during his boyhood itself that Southey had thought of writing an epical poem, devoted exclusively to Hindu mythology. In a letter to his friend Charles Butler, he wrote:[10]

> When I was a schoolboy at Westminister I frequented the house of a schoolfellow who has continued to this day to be one of my most intimate and dearest friends. The house was so near Deans Yard that it was hardly considered as being out of our prescribed bounds; and I had free access to the library, a well-stored and pleasant room, looking over the river. There, many of my truant hours were delightfully spent in reading Picart's *Religious Ceremonies*. The book impressed my imagination strongly, and before I left school I had formed the intention of exhibiting all the more prominent and poetical forms of mythology which have at any time maintained among mankind, and of making each the groundwork of an heroic poem.

The inspiration of writing an epic on each of the mythologies of the world was in this way derived from the poet's reading of Bernard Picart's *Religious Ceremonies* whose full title is *The Ceremonies And Religious Customs of the Idolatrous*

Nations Together with Historical Annotations and Several Curious Discussions equally instructive and entertaining, written originally in French and illustrated with a large number of Folio Copper Plates, all beautifully designed by Bernard Picart and curiously Engraved by most of the Best Hands in Europe, faithfully translated into English by a Gentleman, sometime fellow of St. John's College, Oxford, (printed by William Jackson, for Claude Du Bosc, Engraver at the Golden Head in Charles Street, Covent Garden, 1733). The second part of Volume IV of the book deals with Indian religion, mythology, religious customs and philosophical notions and beliefs. It seems that Southey had read this volume very closely and carefully for his Indian epic.

The central motif used in the poem is that 'curses are like young chickens: they always come home to roost.'[11] This proverb Southey had learnt from William Tyler, brother of his aunt—Ms Tyler—half-sister to his mother: the poet had spent some years with Ms Tyler at Bath. According to Professor Dowden, the maxim was turned into Greek by Coleridge to serve as motto to *The Curse of Kehama*.[12] It is very interesting to note that the motif of the unfailing impact of curses is typically Indian. The *Rāmāyana*, the *Mahābhārata* and the Purāṇas are full of stories of the curses of the sages which never went amiss. The curse of Durvasā against Shakuntalā in Kalidāsa's famous play is the most glaring example of this and Southey and all enlightened Englishmen of letters were fully aware of the Sanskrit play in the English and Latin translation of Sir William Jones.

In *The Curse of Kehama*, Southey has been able to capture the true spirit of India and her manners. In the 'Preface' to the poem, he does appear to be quite hostile to the mythology of the Hindus, for he asserts there that the religion of the Hindus is 'of all false religions the most monstrous in its fables, and the most fatal in its effects.' But there is no denying that he, nevertheless, felt strongly fascinated by its intricacies and complexities and had used the best of his poetic talents in its delineation. In a contemporary review of

the poem soon after its publication, the reviewer John Foster sorrowfully observed:[13]

> Our author has made a strenous and unreleasing effort to spread all the colours of poetry over all this portion of the fiction; and it is very mortifying to think how much instructive pleasure might have been given a rational application of about half as much beauty of images and versification as he has here succeeded in throwing away on this mystical insanity. Not only is this beauty wasted lamentably in being expended on such a futile and most ridiculous piece of heathenism; it is also injured, as beauty, by the nature of the subject, considered merely as a matter of poetical exhibition. The subject being made up of gods, devatas, supra-terrestrial mountains, sky voyages, Swarg's gales, groves, and lakes, has a showy uniformity which precludes all relief of poetical light and shade.

Indeed, the thesis of John Foster is that Southey has wasted his poetic energies on a trivial subject like Hindu mythology, full of all kinds of irrational and baseless notions and fancies. But the question is which mythology of the world is free from these elements? Is Greek mythology not a bundle of nonsense and irrationalism? And what about the stories of the Old Testament of the Holy Bible? Does not it contain all kinds of absurd, irrational and illogical myths, having no substance and depth? The fact of the matter is that Foster was a Christian polemist, bent upon proving the superiority of the Christian faith over all other faiths, most importantly the Hindu faith. The result was that Hinduism appeared to him to be worthless, having no intellectual, moral or spiritual basis, only a bundle of superstitions and irrational rituals. He failed to realize the inherent beauty and symbolic import of the mythology of India. Southey himself had expressed, as has been indicated earlier, a view of the Hindu mythology, similar to Foster's in his 'Preface' to the *Curse of Kehama*, presumably under the influence of the Christian missionaries

and with a view to appeasing the narrow-minded Christian readers of his own country. But it appears that in the heart of his hearts he loved Hindu mythology and had realized its inherent beauty and sublimity. If that was not the case, then what was the point in writing such a long poem on a subject which he had characterized as 'most monstrous in its fables and most fatal in its effects'? He has not given any hint of his having intended the poem to be read as a satire against Hinduism either. No critic of Southey has considered *The Curse of Kehama* as a satire. Thus to me, at any rate, the 'Preface' seems to be an afterthought, something added to the poem at a later stage with the sole motive of silencing the reactionary elements in the reading public of Great Britain. It becomes very obvious when he calls the mythological figures of the Brahmins 'anti-picturesque'.[14] As an illustration of this he cites the specific example of the *Bhagavat-Geeta* which depicts the Lord as 'possessing a hundred heads, whose countenance is turned on every side'.[15] Every sensible and unbiased reader of the Hindu scripture would agree that the episode called 'Vishvaroopdarshana' of its eleventh chapter is the grandest possible, the most sublime and the most elevating of poetic conceptions; at least that was the view of the first Sanskrit-knowing Englishmen who had remained uninfluenced by the Christian missionaries in India at the time of their first encounter with the Sanskrit text—I mean, Warren Hastings and Charles Wilkins, both of whom have paid the richest tribute to the sublimity of the episode concerned; to them the cosmic form of the Lord depicted in the *Gītā* had not appeared to be 'anti-picturesque' at all.[15]

However, it may be, after a persual of the text of *The Curse of Kehama* as well as of the footnotes to it, one is compelled to admire Southey's enthusiasm for the literature on Indian philosophy, religion, poetry and mythology that had been made available to England of his day in English, French, Spanish, Latin or German translation—Indian texts in their European translations as well as a large body of writings about Hindu customs, manners and mythology. He

seems to have ransacked *Yajurveda, Shatapatha Brāhmaṇa, Manusmṛti, Rāmāyaṇa, Mahābhārata, Shrīmadbhāgavata, Shivapurāṇa, Abhigyānashākuntalam, Geetagovindam* and of course the *Bhagavad-Geeta*: quotations from each of these texts have been cited in the footnotes. Among the writers and works on India by the European Orientalists that he cited are: Bernier's *Memoirs*, Stavorinus, A. Roger, *Historical Sketches of the South of India*, Crawford, Pietro Della Valle, Claudius Buchanan, Halhed, Sonnerat, Tennant, Symes, Hodges, *Oriental Sports*, Sir William Jones, Maurice's *History of Hindostan*, Moor's *Hindu Pantheon*, Wildford, Mandelslo, and Picart. He also quotes from non-Hindu works of India, available to him in their English translations such as *Darul Shekh* by Halhed and *Ayeen Acbery*. However, the work which had given him some real inkling into the Hindu mind was *The Bhagavad Geeta* in Charles Wilkins's English translation which he mentions so prominently in the 'Preface' to his epic.

There are 9 allusions in *The Curse of Kehama* to the *Bhagavaḍ-Geeta*, clearly stated by the poet himself in the footnotes including the mention of the work in the 'Preface' to the poem. Clearly, the poet had borrowed nine ideas or concepts of the *Gītā* to enrich the texture of his poem.

Let us take up the allusion to the Hindu scripture in the 'Preface' first. Here, the theme of the discussion, as I have stated earlier, is the anti-picturesqueness of the mythological figures of the Hindus. In support of his assertion, Southey calls our attention to the hundreds of heads that Krishna possessed while revealing His Universal Form to Arjuna, with the result that His countenance turned on all sides. The English poet is actually referring here to the eleventh verse of the eleventh chapter of the *Gītā* in which Sanjaya describes the extraordinarily enormous form that the Lord had assumed at the request of Arjuna. The original verse runs as follows:

दिव्यमाल्याम्बरधरं दिव्यगन्धानुलेपनम्।
सर्वाश्चर्यमयं देवमनन्तं विश्वतोमुखम्।।

divyamālambaradharaṁ divyagandhānulepanam,
sarvāścaryamayaṁ devam anantaṁ viśvatomukham.

Wilkins had rendered this verse in the following words:[16]

> (The mighty ... and divine being Haree made unto Arjoon evident His Universal Form) adorned with celestial robes and chaplets; anointed with heavenly essence; covered with every marvellous thing; the eternal God, whose countenance is turned on every side.

The words within the bracket in the above extract are not part of the verse under question; they serve as connectives from the preceding stanza as rendered by Wilkins; the words outside the bracket pertain to the Sanskrit verse quoated here. It is the expression 'विश्वतोमुखम्' ('*viśvatomukham*') that Wilkins had rendered by the words of the last clause, i.e. 'whose countenance was turned on every side.' Southey used this very clause of Wilkins's rendering in his 'Preface' to *The Curse of Kehama*.

The most crucial section of Southey's Indian epic, is Canto II and it is entitled 'The Curse'; it gives expression to the concept of the immortality of the soul as developed in *The Bhagavad-Gītā* Chapter II, Verses 20–24. Southey exploits the concept in the following speech of Arvalan, the slayed son of King Kehama, addressed to the slayed son's supposedly all-powerful father:

> Art thou not powerful ... even like a God?
> And must I, through my years of wandering,
> Shivering and naked to the elements,
> In wretchedness await
> The hour of Yama's wrath?
> I thought thou wouldst embody me anew,
> Undying as I am.... Yea, re-create me ... Father, is this all?
> This all? and thou Almighty!
>
> (*The Poetical Works of Robert Southey: Complete in one volume*, Stanza 3, p. 553)

In the speech of Arvalan here, we perceive the *Gītā*'s famous doctrine of the eternity and immortality of the soul.

The personal pronoun used in the expression 'undying as I am' does not refer to the person called Arvalan who was identified by his body which is dead and destroyed; it refers rather to his soul which can never perish. Southey glosses the expression 'undying as I am' by a long quotation from Wilkins, running as follows:

> The soul is not a thing of which a man may say, it hath been, it is about to be, or is to be hereafter; for it is a thing without a birth; it is ancient, constant, and eternal, and not to be destroyed in this mortal frame. How can the man who believeth that this thing is incorruptible, eternal, inexhaustible, and without birth, think that he can either kill or cause it to be killed. As a man throweth away old garments and putteth on new, even so the soul, having quitted its old mortal frames, entereth into others which are new. The weapon divideth it not, the fire burneth is not, the water corrupteth it not, the wind drieth it not away, for it is indivisible, inconsumable, incorruptible, and is not to be dried away; it is eternal, universal, permanent, immoveable; it is invisible, inconceivable, and unalterable.

Southey gives the source of this long quotation in his gloss (footnote 1, p. 553 of his *Poetical Works*) as 'Bhagvat-Geeta' without providing the chapter number or page number of Wilkins's book. However, it is from pages 36-37 of Wilkins's English prose version of the Hindu text, with this difference, of course, that in place of the first 2 words of Southey's quotation (i.e. 'The soul'), the text of Wilkins has the word 'It'. The verses in the original Sanskrit text read as follows:

न जायते म्रियते वा कदाचि-
नायं भूत्वा भविता वा न भूयः।
अजो नित्यः शाश्वतोऽयं पुराणो
न हन्यते हन्यमाने शरीरे॥

वेदाविनाशिनं नित्यं य एनमजमव्ययम्।
कथं स पुरुषः पार्थ कं घातयति हन्ति कम्॥

वासांसि जीर्णानि यथा विहाय
नवानि गृह्णाति नरोऽपराणि।
तथा शरीराणि विहाय जीर्णा-
न्यन्यानि संयाति नवानि देही।।

नैनं छिन्दन्ति शस्त्राणि नैनं दहति पावकः।
न चैनं क्लेदयन्त्यापो न शोषयति मारुतः।।

अच्छेद्योऽयमदाह्योऽयमक्लेद्योऽशोष्य एव च।
नित्यः सर्वगतः स्थाणुरचलोऽयं सनातनः।।

na jāyate mṛyate vā kadāci-
nnāyam bhūtvā bhavitā vā na bhūyaḥ
ajo nityaḥ śāśvato'yaṁ puraṇo
na hanyate hanyamane śarīre.

Vedāvināśinaṁ nityaṁ ya enam ajam avyayam,
kathaṁ sa puruṣah partha kaṁ ghatayati hanti kam.

vāsānsi jīrṇani yathā vihāya
navāni gṛhṇati naro'parāṇi
tathā śarīraṇi vihāya jīrṇany
anyāni samyāti navāni dehī.

nainam chindanti śastraṇi nainaṁ dahati pāvakaḥ,
na cainam kledayntyāpo na śoṣayati mārutaḥ.

acchedyo'yam adāhyo'yam akledyo'śosya eva ca,
nityaḥ sarvagataḥ sthānur acalo'yaṁ sanatanaḥ.

The 5 verses given here occur in the second chapter of the *Gītā* and are the twentieth, twenty-first, twenty-second, twenty-third and twenty-fourth, respectively. It must be placed on record that it was these very verses of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* that had inspired the American mystical poet, Waldo Emerson, to compose his famous poem 'Brahma'.[17] That goes to prove the real popularity of the verses concerned. But the question here is as to why Southey gives such a long gloss for such a simple concept as the immortality of the soul and for just a short expression like 'undying as I am'. He could have served his purpose just by citing

Wilkins's rendering of the twenty-second verse which, out of all the 5, is the most appropriate for the context. The only plausible reason seems to be that he wanted the English readers of his Indian epic to know the doctrine of the *Gītā* in detail through the perspective provided in his gloss.

The third reference to the *Bhagavad-Gītā* in *The Curse of Kehama* occurs in the poem's sixth canto entitled 'Casyapa'. In the fourth section of this canto, the Father of the Immortals, addresses Ereenia, who, out of sheer pity, has brought the apparently lifeless body of Kailyal to be revived in the *ashram* of Caśyapa which no mortal can, as a rule, ever enter. Ereenia agrees that he should not have brought a mortal to the holy atmosphere of the Father of the Immortals but then his heart had melted into pity at the sad plight of the fair maid. At this, Caśyapa says:

> What if the maid be sinful? If her ways
> Were ways of darkness, and her death predoom'd
> To that black hour of midnight, when the Moon
> Hath turn'd her face away,
> Unwilling to behold
> The unhappy end of guilt?
> (*Southey's Poetical Works*, p. 563)

The poet's footnote on this speech acknowledges indebtedness to the following words of 'Kreeshna, in the Bhagvat Geeta':

> I will now speak to thee of that time in which, should a devout man die, he will never return; and of that time in which, dying, he should return again to earth.
>
> Those holy men who are acquainted with Brahma, departing this life in the fiery light of day, in the bright season of the moon, within the six months of the sun's northern course, go unto him; but those who depart in the gloomy night of the moon's dark season, and whilst the sun is yet within the southern path of his journey, ascend for a while into the regions of the moon, and

again return to mortal birth. These two, Light and Darkness, are esteemed the world's eternal ways; he who walks in the former path returneth not; whilst he who walkest in the latter cometh back again upon the earth.

Southey does not provide the chapter or page number of Wilkins's 'Bhagvat Geeta' from which he had quoted the above passage. However, the passage is from page 76 of Wilkins's work. This is the English prose rendering of Verses 23-26 of the eighth chapter of the Hindu scripture. I quote the original texts concerned:

यत्र काले त्वनावृत्तिमावृत्तिं चैव योगिनः।
प्रयाता यान्ति तं कालं वक्ष्यामि भरतर्षभ।। 23।।
अग्निर्ज्योतिरहः शुक्लः षण्मासा उत्तरायणम्।
तत्र प्रयाता गच्छन्ति ब्रह्म ब्रह्मविदो जनाः।। 24।।
धूमो रात्रिस्तथा कृष्णः षण्मासा दक्षिणायनम्।
तत्र चान्द्रमसं ज्योतिर्योगी प्राप्य निवर्तते।। 25।।
शुक्लकृष्णे गती ह्येते जगतः शाश्वते मते।
एकया यात्यनावृत्तिमन्ययावर्तते पुनः।। 26।।

yatra kale tvanāvṛttimavṛttiṁ caiva yoginaḥ,
prayāta yānti taṁ kālaṁ vakśyāmi bharatarṣabha.
agnir joytirahaḥ śuklaḥ ṣaṇmasā uttarāyaṇaṃ,
tatra prayāta gacchanti brahma brahmavido janāḥ.
dhūmo ratristathā kṛṣṇaḥ ṣanmāsā dakṣināyanaṃ,
tatra cāndramasaṃ jyotir yogī prāpya nivartate.
śuklakṛṣne gatī hyete jagataḥ śāśvate mate,
ekayā yātyanāvṛttimanyayāvartate punaḥ.

It is worth recording that William Blake was also influenced by the ideas contained in these very verses of the *Gītā* and that his vision of the lower and higher heavens were based on the North–South symbolism used here, as Northrop Frye suggests.[18]

On page 563 of his *Complete Poetical Works*, Southey provides a footnote on the word 'Indra' in the speech of Ereenia beginning with the words 'I have seen'. In the footnote on 'Indra' he calls our attention to 'a passage in the ninth section

of the Geeta' which, in his view, provides 'a distinct idea of Indra, the King of the Immortals.' Without giving the page number and without mentioning Wilkins's translation of the Hindu text, he quotes the passage concerned:[19]

> These having, through virtue, reached the mansion of the king of *Suras*, feast on the exquisite heavenly food of the Gods; they who have enjoyed this lofty region of Swerga, but whose virtue is exhausted, revisit the habitation of mortals.

The extract cited above occurs on page 80 of Wilkins's work and virtually entails 2 long verses of the original Verses 20 and 21—the latter half of the former and the first half of the latter. I quote the passages in their entirety and italicize the portions involved in Wilkins's extract, cited by Southey:

त्रैविद्या मां सोमपाः पूतपापाः
यज्ञैरिष्ट्वा स्वर्गतिं प्रार्थयन्ते।
ते पुण्यमासाद्य सुरेन्द्रलोक-
मश्नन्ति दिव्यान्दिवि देवभोगान्।। 20।।
ते तं भुक्त्वा स्वर्गलोकं विशालं
क्षीणे पुण्ये मर्त्यलोकं विशन्ति।
एवं त्रयीधर्ममनुप्रपन्ना
गतागतं कामकामा लभन्ते।। 21।।

traividyā māṁ somapāḥ pūtapāpāḥ
yajnair iṣṭvā svargatiṁ prārthayante.
te puṇyam āsādya surendralokam
aśnanti divyān divi devabhogān [20].

te taṁ bhuktvā svargalokaṁ viśālam
kṣīṇe puṇye martyalokaṁ viśanti
evaṁ trayīdharmam anuprapanna
gatāgatam kāmakāma labhante [21].)

The next allusion to the *Bhagavad-Gītā* in *The Curse of Kehama* occurs in the seventh section of its thirteenth canto entitled 'The Retreat'. Here, Kailyal's libations to the souls of her dead ancestors have been described and naturally on the pious act of Kailyal the poet's own comments are:

In such libations pour'd in open glades,
Beside clear streams and solitary shades,
The Spirits of the virtuous dead delight.
(*The Complete Poetical Works*, p. 594.)

With a view to explaining to his native readers this ceremony of the Hindus, Southey quotes, without giving the page number or any other clue, the following extract from Wilkins's Note to the *Bhagvat Geeta*:

> The Hindoos are enjoined by the Veds to offer a cake, which is called Peenda, to the ghosts of their ancestors as far back as the third generation. This ceremony is performed on the day of the new moon in every month. The offering of water is in like manner commanded to be performed daily; and this ceremony is called Tarpan, to satisfy, to appease. The souls of such men as have left children to continue their generation, are supposed to be transported, immediately upon quitting their bodies, into a certain region called *Petree Log*, where they may continue in proportion to their former virtues, provided these ceremonies be not neglected, otherwise they are precipitated into *Nark*, and doomed to be born again in the bodies of unclean beasts; and until, by repeated regenerations, all their sins are done away, and they attain such a degree of perfection as will entitle them to what is called *Mookti*, eternal salvation, by which is understood a release from future transmigrations and an absorption in the nature of the godhead who is called Brahm.

The quotation given here is from the sixth note to the very first chapter of the *Gītā*, given on pages 139-40 of Wilkins's translation. But Southey has chosen to ignore the last sentence of Wilkins's note: 'These ceremonies, which are called *Śradh*, were not unknown to the Greeks and Romans, and are still practised by the followers of Mohommed.' The verse of the *Gītā* that had occasioned Wilkins's long note that

Southey has used in his Indian epic, is cited below; it is the forty-second verse of the first chapter of the *Gītā*:

संकरो नरकायैव कुलघ्नानां कुलस्य च।
पतन्ति पितरो ह्येषां लुप्तपिण्डोदकक्रियाः।।

saṁkaro narakāyaiva kulaghnānāṁ kulasya ca
patanti pitaro hyeṣāṁ luptapindokakakriyāḥ.

Wilkins's English rendering of this verse runs as follows:

> The Sankar provideth hell both for those which are slain and those which survive; and their fore-fathers, being deprived of the ceremonies of cakes and water offered to their manes, sink into the infernal regions.

This rendering is to be found on page 32 of Wilkins's work. The word 'Sankar' used in the rendering is a Sanskrit word; it is the shortened form of the word 'Varṇasamkara', used in the preceding verse (i.e. Verse 41). Wilkins rendered this word by the expression 'spurious brood'. The verse of the *Gītā*, under discussion here, forms part of Arjuna's long speech, addressed to Krishna, explaining the cause of his withdrawal from the war. Arjuna tells Krishna that the war will cause the total ruin of the families of the warriors and that will mean the disappearance of *dharma* and the rise of *adharma*, which is the root of the tainted characater of women. Arjuna further argues that tainted women are sure to beget bastards or what Wilkins calls 'spurious brood' which will be totally indifferent to family duties such as '*śrāddha*' popularly called śrādha or the offering of '*pinda*' (i.e. cake) and water to the manes or the dead ancestors, dwelling in '*Pitṛloka*' (a lower region in the heaven). The manes are delighted when their progeny offers them *śrāddha* on the earth but they become very sad if *śraddha* is denied to them, for in the absence of cake and water they will have to sink to hell. In Southey's poem, Kailyal offers libation or *tarpaṇa* to her manes in the true fashion of a Hindu descendent, alive to her duties to her ancestors's souls.

The next allusion to the *Gītā* in Southey's poem occurs in the tenth section of its ninteenth canto called 'Mount

Calasay' in the prayer of Geendoveer, addressed to 'Seeva' (i.e. 'Shiva'), 'the Holiest One':

> O all-containing Mind,
> Thou art everywhere
> Whom all who seek shall find,
> Hear me, O Seeva, hear the suppliant's prayer.
> (Southey's *Complete Poetical Works*, p. 612.)

With a view to bringing home to his readers that whatever attributes Geendoveer (i.e. 'Gandharva') has allotted to Shiva has an authentic ring about them, Southey quotes Hindu works which invest various gods with those very attributes. For the attribute suggested by the line 'Thou art everywhere', the poet cites 2 works—the *Bhagavat* (i.e. *Shrīmadbhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa*) and the *Bhagavad Geeta*. The former has been quoted in the English version of Sir William Jones and the latter no doubt in the version of Wilkins. The extract cited by him from the *Gītā* here runs as follows:

> I am the creation and the dissolution of the whole universe. There is not anything greater than I, and all things hang on me even as precious gems upon a string. I am moisture in the water, light in the sun and moon, invocation in the Veds, sound in the firmament, human nature in mankind, sweet-smelling savour in the earth, glory in the source of light: in all things I am life: and I am zeal in the zealous; and know O Arjoon that I am the eternal seed of all nature. I am the understanding of the wise, the glory of the proud, the strength of the strong, free from lust and anger; and in animals I am desire, regulated by moral fitness.

In the name of the source for the extract, Southey just writes: 'Kreeshna, in the *Bhagavat Geeta*' (vide latter part of his gloss number, given on page 612 of his *Complete Poetical Works*). However, it is from page 70 of Wilkins's *Gītā* and belongs to Chapter VII of the Hindu text. The verses concerned are half of Verse 6 and all verses from 7 to 11. I quote the original text of Verses 6–11 in their entirety:

एतद्योनीनि भूतानि सर्वाणीत्युपधारय।
अहं कृत्स्नस्य जगतः प्रभवः प्रलयस्तथा।। 6।।
मत्तः परतरं नान्यत्किंचिदस्ति धनंजय।
मयि सर्वमिदं प्रोतं सूत्रे मणिगणा इव।। 7।।
रसोऽहमप्सु कौन्तेय प्रभास्मि शशिसूर्ययोः।
प्रणवः सर्ववेदेषु शब्दः खे पौरुषं नृषु।। 8।।
पुण्यो गन्धः पृथिव्यां च तेजश्चास्मि विभावसौ।
जीवनं सर्वभूतेषु तपश्चास्मि तपस्विषु।। 9।।
बीजं मां सर्वभूतानां विद्धि पार्थ सनातनम्।
बुद्धिर्बुद्धिमतामस्मि तेजस्तेजस्विनामहम्।। 10।।
बलं बलवतां चाहं कामरागविवर्जितम्।
धर्माविरुद्धो भूतेषु कामोऽस्मि भरतर्षभ।। 11।।

etad yonīni bhūtāni sarvāṇity upadhāraya
aham kṛtsnasya jagataḥ prabhavaḥ pralayastathā.
mattah parataram nānyat kimcid asti dhananjaya
mayi sarvam idam protam sūtre maṇigaṇā iva.
raso'ham apsu kaunteya prabhāsmi śaśi-sūryayoḥ
praṇavah sarvavedeṣu śabdaḥ khe pauruṣam nṛṣu.
puṇyo gandhaḥ pṛthivyām ca tejaścāsmi vibhāvasau
jīvanam sarvabhūteṣu tapaścāsmi tapasviṣu.
bījam mām sarvabhūtānām viddhi pārtha sanātanam
buddhir buddhimatāmasmi tejas tejasvināmaham.
balam balavatām cāham kāma-rāga-vivarjitam
dharmāviruddho bhūteṣu kamo'smi bharatarṣabha.

Every sensible reader will agree that the long quotation in the footnote on the line of *The Curse* is out of proportion and also uncalled for; but it does parade Southey's knowledge of Indology.

The next reference to the *Gītā* in *The Curse of Kehama* occurs in the fifth section of the poem's twenty-third canto entitled 'Padalon' (i.e. *Pātāla Loka*) where the prospective sway of Kehama over the entire universe has been vividly described. The asurs (or demons) are looking forward to the day when they would like

The contest to renew,
And wield their arms again in happier hour;

And with united power,
Followig Kehama's triumph, to press on
From world to world, and Heaven to Heaven, and sphere
To sphere, till Hemkoot shall be their own,
And Meru-Mount, and Indra's Swerga-Bowers,
And Brama's region, where the heavenly Hours,
Weave the vast circle of his age-long day.
(Southey's *Complete Poetical Works*, p. 620.)

The last line of this quotation is, according to footnote 1 on page 620 of his work, based on the following words of 'Kreeshna, in the Bhagavat Geeta':

> They who are acquainted with day and night know that the day of Brahma is as a thousand revolutions of the Yoogs, and that his night extendeth for a thousand more. On the coming of that day all things proceed from invisibility to visibility; so, on the approach of night, they are all dissolved away in that which is called invisible. The universe, even, having existed, is again dissolved; and now again, on the approach of day, by divine necessity, is reproduced. That which, upon the dissolution of all things else, is not destroyed, is superior and of another nature from that visibility: it is invisible and eternal. He who is thus called invisible and incorruptible is even he who is called the Supreme Abode; which men having once obtained, they never more return to earth: that is my mansion.

Again, Southey does not give the page number of his source; nor does he mention the name of Wilkins; he only remarks 'Kreeshna in the Bhagavat Geeta'. However, the extract, cited here, is from pages 75-76 of Wilkins's work and is the English prose rendering of Verses 17-21 of the eighth chapter of the Hindu scripture. Here are provided the Sanskrit texts of the verses concerned:

सहस्रयुगपर्यन्तमहर्यद् ब्रह्मणो विदुः।
रात्रिं युगसहस्रान्तां तेऽहोरात्रविदो जनाः॥ 17॥

अव्यक्ताद्व्यक्तयः सर्वाः प्रभवन्त्यहरागमे।
राज्यागमे प्रलीयन्ते तत्रैवाव्यक्तसंज्ञके।। 18।।
भूतग्रामः स एवायं भूत्वा भूत्वा प्रलीयते।
राज्यागमेऽवशः पार्थ प्रभवत्यहरागमे।। 19।।
परस्तस्मात्तु भावोऽन्योऽव्यक्तोऽव्यक्तात्सनातनः।
यः स सर्वेषु भूतेषु नश्यत्सु न विनश्यति।। 20।।
अव्यक्तोऽक्षर इत्युक्तस्तमाहुः परमां गतिम्।
यं प्राप्य न निवर्तन्ते तद्धाम परमं मम।। 21।।

sahastrayugaparyantam ahar yad brahmaṇo viduḥ
ratriṁ yugasahastrāntāṁ te'ho ratravido janāḥ.
avyaktād vyaktayaḥ sarvāḥ prabhavanty aharāgame
ratryāgame pralīyante tatraivāvyaktasamjnake.
bhūtagramaḥ sa evāyaṁ bhūtva bhūtva pralīyate
ratryāgame'vaśaḥ partha prabhavatyahrāgame.
parastasmāttu bhavo'nyo 'vyakto'vyaktāt sanātanaḥ
yaḥ sa sarveṣu bhūteṣu naśyatsu na vinaśyati.
avyakto'kṣara ityuktas tam āhuḥ paramāṁ gatim
yaṁ prāpya na nivartante taddhām paramaṁ mama.

Southey's line in the 'Curse' refers to the Hindu concept of '*Kalpa*' or a day of Brahmā, consisting of 1000 *yugas* which are equal to 432 million years of the mortals. For the authority behind the idea of 'the vast circle of his age-long day', the poet cites an extract from Wilkins's *Gītā* involving several verses of the original, many of which have nothing to do with the idea of '*Kalpa*'; only the first verse cited above has a direct bearing on it and the rest are concerned with the glorification of Nārāyaṇa or Krishna.

The last explicit reference in *The Curse of Kehama* to the *Bhagavad-Gītā* occurs in the ninth section of the epic's twenty-fourth canto entitled 'The Amreet'. Kehama tells Kailyal that Fate has decreed

> Mine thou must be, being doom's with me to share
> The Amreet-cup of immrtality;
> (Southey's *Complete Poetical Works*, p. 624.)

As a gloss on this passage, Southey provides a long note running into several pages (pages 624-26), covering both colu-

mns of the closely printed rectos as well as verses of Southey's footnotes. The foreword to this long note reads: 'Mr Wilkins has given the genuine history of this liquor, which was produced by churning the sea with a mountain.'

Now, Southey's long quotation is but an extract from the *Mahābhārata* (Book I, Chapter 15), translated into English prose by Charles Wilkins himself. This is incorporated in his notes to his translation of the *Gītā* (vide Note 78). This note is intended to serve as a gloss on the word 'Oachisrava' (i.e. *Uccaihśravā*) occurring on page 86 of his *Gītā*. The Sanskrit verse that had given an occasion to Wilkins's extremely long note, is the twenty-seventh verse of the tenth chapter of the *Gītā*; it runs as follows:

उच्चैःश्रवसमश्वानां विद्धि माममृतोद्भवम्।
ऐरावतं गजेन्द्राणां नराणां च नराधिपम्।।

uccaihśravasam aśvānāṁ viddhi māṁ amṛtodbhavam
airāvataṁ gajendrāṇāṁ narāṇaṁ ca narādhipam.

Wilkins's rendering of this verse reads:

> Know that amongst the horses I am Oachisrava who arose with the Amreeta from out (sic.) the ocean. Amongst elephants I am Iravat, and the sovereign among men.

Thus, there are 9 explicit debts in *The Curse of Kehama* to the *Bhagavad-Gītā* and I believe there are numerous implicit ones, too. It is self-evident from this that Southey had mastered the Hindu text in Wilkins's version from the beginning to the end for he quotes from almost all the eighteen chapters of the work. Indeed, his Indian epic would have remained quite imperfect in the absence of the ethical and philosophical thoughts of the *Gītā* because these thoughts pervade all layers of the living and thinking of the Hindus. As a matter of fact, we cannot conceive of an epical poem on the religion of the Hindus without some representation of the thoughts and ideas from their most popular and representative scripture by which they swear, live and have their beings. In his

private life Southey had adopted at least one doctrine of the *Gītā* which is variously called metempsychosis, palingenesis, transmigration of the soul and re-birth. In one of his letters he observes:[20]

> I have a strong and lively faith in a state of continued consciousness from this stage of existence, and that we shall recover the consciousness of some lower stages through which we may previously have passed seems to me not impossible.... The system of progressive existence seems, of all others, the most benevolent; and all that we do understand is so wise and so good, and all we do or do not, so perfectly and overwhelmingly wonderful, that the most benevolent system is the most probable.

Who can deny that Southey is here subscribing to the Hindu belief in a long cycle of births and deaths, ending in the permanent release called '*mukti*' on the soul's realization of its identity with Brahma or the Ultimate Reality? The concluding portion of his lyric 'Autumn' seems to be articulating the essential philosophy of the *Gītā*:[21]

> Oh, my friend,
> That thy faith were as mine! that couldst see
> Death still producing life, and evil still
> Working its own destruction; couldst behold
> The strifes and troubles of this troubled world
> With the strong eye that sees the promised day
> Dawn through this night of tempest! All things then
> Would minister to joy; then should thine heart
> Be healed and harmonized, and thou wouldst feel,
> God, always, everywhere, and all in all.

John Drew is of the firm view[22] that *The Curse of Kehama* had played an important part in the process of recharging English poetry by making familiar the imagery of the Asiatics, especially the Indians. I accept Drew's view in toto and assert that the imagery referred to came mainly from

Wilkins's *Gītā* which Southey, despite his Christian prejudices against Hinduism, had fully absorbed and assmilated. Indeed, he is one of the most noteworthy of English men of letters of the nineteenth century who were genuinely impressed and influenced by the wisdom of the Indians as incorporated in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*.

Notes and References

1. Vide Edward Dowden, *Southey*, Macmillan & Co. Ltd., St. Martin's Street, London, 1909, p. 121. The fact gets strong confirmation from Shelley's letter no. 142 in *Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley* edited by Frederick L. Jones, 2 vols., Oxford, 1964, Vol. I, p. 191.
2. Shelley used to recommend the *Curse* to his close friends and acquaintances; this is revealed in his letters. In letters no. 82 and 87, addressed to Miss Hitchener (i.e. Elizabeth Hitchener) he recommends it as his favourite poem. When Mary Godwin came to live with him, Shelley read the *Curse* out to her. He was as ready to cite passages from it in 1821 as he had been 10 years earlier. See letter 144 and letter 653 in *Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley* edited by Frederick L. Jones, Oxford, Volumes I and II, pp. 101, 112, 195, 330. See note 1 above.
3. For Coleridge's voracious reading and the remark made by him on his wide reading see the 'Preface' of J.L. Lowes in *The Road to Xanadu*, Boston and New York, 1927; revised 1930. Vide also pp. 119-20 of Lowes' eminent book.
4. Cited by Professor Dowden in his book *Southey*, op. cit., p. 105. According to Dowden, Southey's personal library had 14,000 volumes. It must be placed on record that De Quincey called Southey's library his wife and mistress and mother to him. See Dowden's *Southey*, p. 103.
5. J.W. Robberds, *Memoir of ... the late William Taylor of Norwich*, 2 Vols., London, 1949, Vol. I, p. 359—Southey's letter to Taylor.
6. *The Poetical Works of Robert Southey Complete in One Volume*, New Edition, Longmans, Green & Co., London, 1871, p. 582, column one, the last but one note shown by an asterisk.

7. Ibid., p. 578, second column, the last note which has been shown by an asterisk.
8. Vide the British Library copy of Abbe J.A. Dubois, *Description of the Character, Manners and Customs of the People of India*, trans. unnamed, London, 1817, pp. 323-24. It is usually called *Hindu Manners*.
9. Vide Robert Southey's 4-volume *Commonplace Books*, Vol. IV, pp. 12-15.
10. Quoted by Dowden in his *Southey*, op. cit., p. 22.
11. The proverb serves as an epigraph for the *Curse of Kehama*. See *The Poetical Works of Robert Southey*, op. cit., p. 548 where it is given just below its Greek version.
12. See Dowden's *Southey*, op. cit., p. 15.
13. John Foster, '*Southey's Curse of Kehama*', *The Eclectic Review*, March and April, 1811, reproduced in *Contributions Biographihcal, Literary and Philosophical To The Eclectic Review*, 2 vols., by John Foster, Thomas Ward & Co., Patermaster Row, London, 1844., p. 134. The article occupies pp. 122-66 of the second volume of the book.
14. The full statement of Southey is: 'No figures can be imagined more anti-picturesque, and less poetical, than the mythological personages of the Bramins.' see *The Poetical Works of Robert Southey*, op. cit., p. 548, second column (top).
15. Ibid., p. 548—second column (middle part).
16. Charles Wilkins, *Bhagavat-Geeta*, op. cit., p. 37.
17. See Atkinson (ed.), *The Selected Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, New York, 1950, p. 809.
18. Northrop Frye, *Fearful Symmetry*, first published by Princeton University Press, 1947, and then in 1962 by Bacon Press, Boston, by arrangement with Princeton University Press, p. 311.
19. Charles Wilkins, *Bhavagat-Geeta*, op. cit., p. 80. 'These' of the quotation refers to the followers of the Vedas, i.e. those who worship God with the fruits of their worship in mind. They are to be contrasted with those who worship without any fruits of their work in mind.
20. Quoted by E.D. Walker in *Reincarnation, a Study of Forgotten Truth*, Boston, Houghton, Mifflin, 1888, p. 94. It has also been cited by Joseph Head and S.L. Craston in *Reincarnation in World Thought*, Julian Press, New York, 1967, p. 278.

21. For the text of the poem entitled 'Autumn' see *The Poetical Works Of Robert Southey*, op. cit., pp. 139-40. The quotation from the poem cited here clearly makes a very poetic use of the concept of '*Sthitaprajnatā*' propounded in the second chapter of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, Verses 54-71.
22. John Drew, *India and the Romantic Imagination*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, Oxford, New York, 1987, p. 236.

Some Aspects of India in the Poetry of P.B. Shelley with Special Reference to the *Bhagavad-Gītā*

There is no denying the fact that India had emerged by the close of the eighteenth century as almost synonymous with imagination and that all Romantic writers believed that she was the original home of culture and civilization. Indeed for Shelley she had a very special attraction. The great critic and scholar G. Wilson Knight had correctly noted that 'India is magnetic to Shelley.'[1] The reason is not far to seek. All students of English Romantic poetry will agree that of all the Romantic poets Shelley is the most visionary and mystical and India has been the abode of visionaries and mystics since times immemorial. The poet had cherished an ardent desire of visiting the land of his heart's desire and of breathing its serene air. Following in the footsteps of his early mentor—Robert Southey, who, as we have noted in the chapter devoted to that poet,[2] had once planned to visit India, our poet had made enquiries from his friend Peacock at the India House about the prospects of obtaining employment in the court of some Maharajah.[3] However, his hopes of coming to India were thwarted by the discouraging reply of Thomas Love Peacock. But Shelley's love for India remained unshaken and unbounded and found a sincere and profound expression in his poetry at all stages of the growth of the poet's mind. I will first allude to the passages mentioning India, scattered in the letters and poetry of his early period as also that of what Kenneth Neil Cameron calls 'Goden Years'[4]

(i.e. the period from the breakdown of the poet's marriage with Harriet Westbrook in 1814 to his death in Italy in 1822) during which his major poems were written. And then I propose to refer to the passages reflecting Indian philosophy, religion and literature with a view to establishing the extent to which Shelley had imbibed the spirit of India.

It is during the impressionable summer of 1811 that we have the clearest record of India engaging Shelley's psyche. In the month of June of that year, in a letter addressed to one of his several beloveds and his close correspondent—Elizabeth Hitchoner—Shelley warns the lady that, beautiful as it is in poetry, she should not in the true style of Hindoostanish devotion[5] personify virtue as the Deity in the way war had once been personified as Mars, policy as Juno, etc. Similarly, in a letter to his friend Thomas Jefferson Hogg in June 1811 itself, dissuading Hogg from forming an attachment to his sister, Shelley speaks in terms of sacrificing at the altar and of becoming an unreflecting votary at the shrine of the Indian Camdeo,[6] the god of mystic love. Clearly, by the year 1811 the poet had kept himself abreast of Indian mythology that had been made available to the English readers through the efforts of the English Orientalists such as Alexander Dow,[7] Charles Wilkins,[8] Sir William Jones,[9] Thomas Maurice,[10] Francis Wilford,[11] and of course, Edward Moor[12] and also through Southey's Indian epic *The Curse of Kehama*[13] (1810) and the Indian novel *The Missionary* written by Lady Morgan née Sydney Owenson, references to which occur in Shelley's letters.[14] It must be put on record here that *The Curse of Kehama* along with the footnotes accompanying the text, constitutes a virtual encyclopaedia of Indian mythology and that the work had made a tremendous impact on the young mind of Shelley, compelling him to go to the residence of Southey in Keswick with a view to paying his homage to the elder poet. The impact of *The Curse of Kehama* on Shelley's magnum opus, *Prometheus Unbound* (1820), is very clear: both poems depict Indian scenes and scenery lovingly and gorgeously.

Queen Mab (written during 1812-13), the most significant product of the early literary career of Shelley, records the poet's fascination for the Himalayas which he describes as the 'rival of the Andes'. Describing the journey of the soul of Ianthe in a magic car, the poet sings:

> The magic car moved on.
> From the swift sweep of wings
> The atmosphere in flaming sparkles flew
> And where the burning wheels
> Eddied above the mountain's loftiest peak
> Was traced a line of lightning.
> Now far above a rock the utmost verge
> Of the wide earth it flew,
> The rival of the Andes, whose dark brow
> Frowned o'er the silver sea (lines 123–32).

That the poet's love for the Himalayas was very genuine and sincere is clear from the fact that he retained this passage in the revised version of the poem entitled 'The Daemon of the World'. Though India has not been mentioned here by name yet in his view the highest spot from which Ianthe could visualize the whole of the world could be supplied only by her, she being the most highly spiritualized place on the earth. India had already captivated the heart and soul of the poet when he wrote his juvenile piece 'Bigotry's Victim'. In this poem we have a tiger transfixed blind 'Whilst India's rocks to his death yells reply' (line 8). Clearly, the poet believed that India was the only place which could provide solace and comfort to all creatures in times of distress. The poet was so firmly confirmed in this belief that he makes the hero of *Alastor* (1815) find rest after his long wandering in a vale of Cashmire, the cradle of civilization. I quote the relevant passage:

> The poet wandering on through Arabie
> And Persia, and the wild Carmanian waste,
> And o'er the aerial mountains which pour down
> Indus and Oxus from their icy caves,

In joy and exultation held his way;
Till in the vale of Cashmire, far within
Its loneliest dell, where odorous plants entvine
Beneath the hollow rocks a natural bower
Beside a sparkling rivulet he stretched
His languid limbs.

(11. 140-49)

However, the poet's magnum opus, that is, *Prometheus Unbound* supplies the largest number of references to India. The entire action of the play takes place in India. Shelley is very emphatic about the locale of this play: the poet precisely and clearly states that it is Indian. The drama opens, as the state direction says 'on a ravine of icy rocks in the Indian Caucasus'. The very fact that the poet wrote his masterpiece against an Indian background is proof positive of his deep interest in India. Joseph Raben has very brilliantly brought out the significance of the Indian locale of the play in an article entitled 'Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*: why the Indian Caucasus?' which appeared in *Keats Shelley Journal* XII (1963), pages 95–106. The frequency with which references to India occur in the poem is surprising indeed. In the first act the Second Voice declares:

Never such a sound before
To the Indian waves we bore (lines 3-4)

Even before these lines we come across the word 'India' in the speech of Prometheus:

Ye icy Springs, stagnant with wrinkling frost,
Which vibrated to hear me, and then crept
Shuddering through India (lines 62-64).

The stage direction of Act II, Scene I reads: 'Morning. A lovely vale in the Indian Caucasus.' But the scene has already been set in the closing lines of the preceding act in the speech of Panthea, addressed to Prometheus:

Deeply in truth; but the eastern star looks white,
And Asia waits in that far Indian vale,

The scene of her sad exile rugged once
And desolate and frozen, like this ravine,
But now invested with fair flowers and berbs
And haunted by sweet airs and sounds which flow
Among the wood and waters, from the aether
Of her transforming presence which would fade
If it were mingled not with thine (lines 25–33).

In Act II, Scene III, Asia and Panthea, enroute to Demogorgan's cave pause on 'A Pinnacle of Rock among Mountains which overlook,' as Asia graphically describes:

...a wide plain of billowy mist,
A a lake, paving in the morning sky,
With azure waves which burst in silver light
Some Indian vale (lines 19-23).

In the fourth scene of the same act, Asia recounts Prometheus's acts of civilizing mankind; among these was the fact that:

He taught to rule, as life directs the limbs,
The tempest-winged chariots of the ocean,
And the Celt knew the Indian (lines 92-94).

In Act III, Scene III, Prometheus portrays the cave to which he and his wife Asia will retire to eternal bliss:

From its curved roof the mountain's frozen tears
Like snow, or silver, or long diamond spires
Hang downward, raining forth a doubtful light:
And there is heard the ever moving air
Whispering without from tree to tree, and birds,
And bees; and all around are mossy seats
And the rough walls are clothed with long soft grass:
(lines 15-21)

We get to know the location of these windy, icy mountains when Earth commands the spirit that will guide them all thither:

Run, wayward,
And guide this company beyond the peak
Of Bacchic Nysa, Maenad-haunted mountain,
And beyond Indus and its tribute rivers. (lines 152-55)

In the passage here Shelley clearly alludes to the place of Bacchus's nurture called Nysa, the mountain which had given the name 'Dionysus' (i.e. literally the god of Nysa) to the god otherwise called Bacchus. It must be noted here that Nysa was shown by the Classical geographers like Strabo as lying above Taxila (vide the famous book entitled *Geography* by Strabo,[15] providing the map of the then known world) and that Alexander the Great had met a Nysan tribe[16] that was the follower of Bacchus during his invasion of India. Evidently, Shelley is exploiting this information creatively in his poetic drama.

The last reference to India in the *Prometheus Unbound* occurs in the last act of the play (i.e. Act IV) in a Chorus of the Spirits of the human mind who sing:

We join the throng
Of the dance and the song,
By the whirlwind of gladness borne along;
As the flying-fish leap
From the Indian deep,
And mix with the sea birds half asleep (lines 83-88).

That India was always present in the imagination of Shelley is clear from the fact that he allots her a very significant place in almost all his great poems. 'The Sensitive Plant' which had been written in 1820 and addressed to Mary Godwin, in all probability, contains 2 allusions to India. The first occurs in the eleventh stanza of the second part of the poem in the following lines:

And all killing insects and gnawing worms
And things of obscene and unlovely forms,
She bore in a basket of Indian woof,
Into the rough woods far aloof (lines 155-58).

And the second allusion to India occurs in the eighth stanza of the third part of the poem:

> And Indian plants of scent and hue
> The sweetest that ever were fed on dew
> Leaf by leaf, day after day,
> Were massed into the common clay (lines 205-08).

Both the references to India in the poem confirm that the locale of the action of the poem is Indian, in all probability, Cashmire, the 'undefiled paradise'. The fact that the poet has made India the venue of the action of the 'Sensitive Plant' leaves us in no doubt whatsoever that the poet loves India from the very core of his heart. The drama entitled *Hellas* written in 1821 in support of the Greek struggle for freedom from the serfdom of the Turkish rule further stresses the importance that India had for the poet. For in that play India has been recalled several times quite prominently. There is a character simply called 'an Indian slave' who is posted in the seraglio of Mahmud, the Turkish King. The Chorus consisting of the Greek Captive Women at the very outset of the play allude to India twice, once directly and once by the vague nomenclature of 'Orient' rather wistfully. Wishing Mahmud profound sleep, they sing:

> We strew these opiate flowers
> On thy restless pillow;
> They were stript from Orient bowers.
> By the Indian billow
> Be thy sleep calm and deep,
> Like theirs who fell—not ours who weep.

In another Chorus of the Greek Captive Women, we have the word 'Imaus', the Persian form of the 'Himalayas':

> In the great morning of the world
> The Spirit of God with might unfurled
> The flag of freedom over chaos
> And all its banded anarchs fled,

Like vultures frightened from Imaus
Before an earthquake's tread—

A little before his death, Shelley had planned to write another drama which is available to us in 2 fragmentary scenes and is titled 'Fragments of an Unfinished Drama'. It is entirely an Indian piece for its locale as well as *dramatis personae* are Indian: Indian islands, Indian plants, Indian Enchantress and Indian Youth. In the fiftieth line of this piece, Shelley refers to Ganga and Yamuna without naming them and to the Himalayas by name. I quote the relevant passage;

A soft hand issued from the veil of fire,
Holding a cup like a magnolia flower,
And poured upon the earth within the vase
The element with which it overflowed,
Brighter than morning light, and purer than
The water of the springs of Himalah (lines 144-50).

If the Indian Youth in the play is Shelley's self-portraiture as Cameron suggests,[17] then clearly the poet has paid a very rich tribute to the young lovers of India represented by Krishna, the hero of *Geetagovindam*, the lyrical drama of the Sanskrit poet Jayadeo. It would not be out of place to mention here that Jayadeo's Sanskrit drama was available to the West in the English translation of Sir William Jones whose works the poet had read rather avidly. We are bound to take the self-projection by the poet through the Indian Youth as a kind of the fulfilment of the poet's ardent wish to visit India.

When we mention the random references to India in the works of Shelley, we should not forget the poet's love-lyric 'The Indian Serenade' which was composed in June 1819, in all probability for Sophia Stacey, Shelley's cousin as well as his sweetheart. However, it belongs, as Cameron argues,[18] more plausibly, to Jane Mary Williams who had come to Pisa to see Shelley in the company of Edward Ellerker Williams, her supposed husband, being inspired in favour of Shelley by Thomas Medwin, the poet's cousin who had served the

English East India Company as a lieutenant in the Dragoon Guards and had retired in 1819 on half-pay. Since Jane Mary Williams had returned from India to meet the poet, Shelley, as a true lover, quite appropriately, would present to his lady-love a musical piece with an Indian background, mentioning things and objects she was supposedly familiar with. The word 'Indian' in the title of the lyric is very significant because by presenting an Indian serenade at night at the doorstep of the lady, the poet, to all intents and purposes, wishes to present himself before her as a symbol of true and perfect love. The poet evokes the typically Indian atmosphere in the poem by means of his use of the Sanskrit word *champaka* (meaning a flower popularly called 'champa' in India) in the second stanza of the poem which runs as follows:

The wandering airs they faint
  On the dark, the silent stream.
The Champak odours fail
  Like sweet thoughts in a dream!
The nightingale's complaint
  It dies upon her heart;
As I must die on thine
  Oh, beloved as thou art.

The use of 'Champak' here, I am sure, should be taken as the measure of Shelley's knowledge of Indian culture and of the literary traditions of India. In any event, the poet seems to have been on the look out for the books appearing in Europe having bearing on India. I feel convinced that the poet had read very closely Edward Moor's सर्व्वदेव सभा or *The Hindu Pantheon* (London, 1810). Moor is, in all probability, the only writer who supplies a very interesting bit of information regarding 'Champaka' on page 450 of his eminent book that Shelley has utilized for the poetic purpose of the 'Indian Serenade'. The relevant information is that the flower is so strong in smell that bees refuse to extract pollen from it with the result that it remains sadly mortified. In the absence of this very valuable information the thought of the

verse of Shelley's poem, where the word 'Champak' has been used, will be hard to grasp.

The references to India, scattered in the work of the poet, compel us to conclude that he had read very carefully the Sanskrit studies of the Orientalists such as Sir William Jones, Thomas Maurice, Edward Moor, and of course, (Sir) Charles Wilkins. In his letters he mentions some of these Orientalists and their works. Though there is no reference to Wilkins's *Geeta* in the works of Shelley so far as I know them, the poet could not have missed the reference to the Hindu scripture in the 'Preface' to Southey's *Curse of Kehama*, a work that Shelley loved to read again and again. In any case, the impact wielded by the *Gītā* on the speculative thought of Shelley as revealed in his poetry is undeliable.

It is high time now that I dealt with the passages in the poetry of Shelley surcharged with the religious and metaphysical spirit of India and are in the style of the Hindu religious poets. The impression we form of Shelley from a close reading of his poems is that of a thoroughly religious man, permeated by holy feelings and God-consciousness. This is, indeed, contrary to the picture of Shelley painted by the experts of his poetry and carried by the majority of the students of the English Romantic movement; this is the picture of Shelley the atheist. I would like to assert that Shelley was an atheist only in the sense that he was against the narrow dogmas of the Christian Church of England of the day which were morally hollow and ethically unsatisfactory. The poet in point of fact, had a very high regard for Christ whom he never attacked personally; the greatest proof of this is his worshipful treament of Lord Christ in *Hellas*. Shelley appears to have been, to use a Sanskrit word, a *shākta*, a devotee of Shakti or primordial female Energy of the Universe whom the poet loved to call 'Great Mother'. He also seems to have practised some kind of what Indians calls *tantra-sādhanā* for he very eloquently and unequivocally confesses in the second verse- paragraph of the *Alastor or the Spirit of Solitude*:

Mother of this unfathomable world
Favour my solemn song, for I have loved
Thee ever, and thee only: I have watched
Thy shadow, and the darkness of thy steps,
And my heart ever gazes on the depth
Of thy deep mysteries. I have made my bed
In charnels and on coffins, whose black death
Keeps record of the trophies won from thee,
Hoping to still these obstinate questionings
Of thee and thine, by forcing some long ghost,
Thy messenger, to render up the tale
Of what we are (lines 18-29).

The sentiments expressed in the second and third lines of the above quotation readily recall the words of Adi Shankarāchārya:[19]

परं जाने मातः त्वदनुसरणं क्लेशहरणम्

paraṁ jāne mataḥ tvadanuśaraṇaṁ kleśaharaṇam

(But Mother I know only the sorrow-removing pursuit of thee!)

In all probability Shelley is inspired by Jone's 'Hymn to Sereswaty' and 'Hymn to Lacshmi' which, in turn, echo the hymnology of the Hindus without any inhibition whatsoever. The same source (i.e. the various hymns of Sir William Jones, addressed to Indian goddesses) is very likely to have acquainted the poet with the secret practices of *tantra* such as '*shava-sādhanā*' which the poet clearly indulged in as the sixth and the seventh lines of the quotation unmistably reveal. In the light of this clear profession of his faith by the poet himself, his great poem 'Hymn to Intellectual Beauty' should not be regarded as an agnostic or sceptical piece but rather as a mystic-devotional poem, addressed to the Female Principle of the Universe, variously called Durgā, Luxmī, Sarasvatī or just Great Mother. The poem is doubtlessly very Indian in thought as well as expression. It is very interesting to

know that one of the early admirers of this poem was Warren Hastings who had written a critique of the poem and published it in the volume called *The Bengalee* (Smith Elder & Co., 1829); the poem was written in 1816 and published in 1817 and one year later Hastings wrote his critique of the piece—the same Hastings who had been instrumental in the publication of Wilkins's *Bhagavat-Geeta* in 1785 and was a Sanskritist in his own right, having made a translation of a considerable part of the *Mahābhārata*.[20] Perhaps, Hastings had been moved by the Indian metaphysics that permeates the poem which speaks in the voice of the Hindu scripture (i.e. the *Bhagavad-Gītā*). Those who have any doubts on this point should read the first 3 lines of the second stanza of the poem which run as follows:

> Spirit of Beauty, that dost consecrate
> With thine own hues all thou dost shine upon
> Of human thought or form,—where art thou gone?

and say with honesty whether these lines do not articulate the thought contained in the forty-first verse of the tenth chapter of the *Gītā*:

> यद्यद्विभूतिमत्सत्वं श्रीमदूर्जितमेव वा।
> तत्तदेवावगच्छ त्वं मम तेजोंऽशसम्भवम्।।
>
> *yad-yadvibhūtimat sattvaṁ śrīmad ūrjitameva vā*
> *tad-tad evā'vagaccha tvaṁ mama tejoṁsasambhavam.*

which in the version of Wilkins reads as follows:[21]

> And learn, O Arjoon, that every being which is worthy of distinction and pre-eminence is the produce of the portion of my glory.

There cannot be 2 opinions that what Lord Krishna says in the *Gītā* regarding the manifestation of His glory in most excellent objects of the world in respect of beauty and energy is precisely what Shelley says about the expression of the Spirit of Intellectual Beauty in the form of the most excellent thoughts and shapes of human beings. Clearly, the English

poet is here indebted to the Hindu scripture which was available to him in the prose version of Charles Wilkins (1785) and was the subject of discussion among scholarly circles of England.[22] That Shelley was deeply read in the philosophy of India as revealed in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* and the Upanishads is very clear from his poetic employment of many doctrines of the Hindus spelled out in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* very eloquently. The most significant of these doctrines is doubtless the theory of cycle of births and deaths known as Metempsychosis. The most powerful expression of the doctrine is available in the twenty- second verse of the second chapter of the *Gītā* beginning with the words (*Vāsānsi jīrṇani yathā vihāya*):

वासांसि जीर्णानि यथा विहाय
नवानि गृह्णाति नरोऽपराणि।
तथा शरीराणि विहाय जीर्णा-
न्यन्यानि संयाति नवानि देही।।

vāsamsi jīrnani yatha vihāya
navāni gṛhṇāti naro'paraṇi
tathā śarīrāṇi vihāya jīrnany
anyāni samyāti navāni dehī

Wilkins had rendered this passage in the following words:[23]

> As a man throweth away old garments, and putteth on new even so the soul, having quitted its old mortal frames entereth into others which are new.

Shelley, it seems to me, was highly influenced by the doctrine of Metempsychosis as is stated in the verse quoted above from the *Gītā*. He used the doctrine very lucidly and powerfully in the following passage from his poetic drama entitled *Hellas* (1821):

> Worlds on worlds are rolling ever
> From creation to decay
> Like the bubbles on a river
> Sparkling, bursting, borne away.
> But they are still immortal

Who, through birth's orient portal
And death's dark chasm hurrying to and fro
Clothe their unceasing flight
In the brief dust and light
Gathered around their chariots as they go;
New shapes they still may weave,
New gods, new laws receive;
Bright or dim are they, as the robes they last
On Death's bare ribs had cast (lines 197-210).

As the passage here clearly demonstrates, Shelley believed in the ceaseless cycle of births and deaths that the souls have to undergo. In the last 2 lines of the passage, the poet has made a very beautiful use of the Hindu doctrine of *karma*, according to which, the individual's actions and dominant mode called *guṇa* in a particular birth determine the nature of his or her body in the next birth. The doctrine is very lucidly stated in the eighteenth verse of the fourteenth chapter of the *Gītā*:

ऊर्ध्वं गच्छन्ति सत्त्वस्था मध्ये तिष्टन्ति राजसाः।
जघन्यगुणवृत्तिस्था अधो गच्छन्ति तामसाः।।

ūrdhvaṁ gacchanti sattvasthā, madhye tiṣṭhanti rājasāḥ
jaghanyaguṇavṛttisthā adho gacchanti tāmasaḥ

In Wilkins's version the passage runs thus:[24]

When the body is dissolved whilst the satva-gun prevaileth, the soul proceedeth to the regions of those immaculate beings who are acquainted with the Most High. When the body findeth dissolution whilst the Rajo-guna is predominate, the soul is born again among those who are attached to the fruits of their actions. So, in like manner, should the body be dissolved whilst Tama-guna is prevalent, the spirit is conceived in the wombs of irrational beings.

It must be affirmed here that the doctrine of Metempsychosis as well as that of *karma* is essentially Hindu and that they reached the Greek shores through Pythagoras and found

their expression in Plato's dialogues especially *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus*;[25] their clear-cut exposition is to be found in the Upanishads which are much older than Pythagoras and Plato.

Shelley also makes very creative use of the Hindu doctrine of Metempsychosis in his lyric 'With a Guitar, To Jane' (1822) in which he argues that Prospero's daughter Miranda has been re-born in the form of his lady-love Jane Williams and Ariel in the form of Shelley whereas Prince Ferdinand has been born in the form of Edward Williams, Jane's husband in the present age. The following lines from the poem presume the poet's belief in the doctrine of cycle of births:

For by permission and command
Of thine own Prince Ferdinand
Poor Ariel sends this silent token
Of more than ever can be spoken
Your guardian spirit, Ariel, who,
From life to life, must still pursue
Your happiness;—for thus alone
Can Ariel ever find his own (lines 9-16).

Many changes have been run
Since Ferdinand and you begun
Your course of love, and Ariel still
Has tracked your steps, and served your will
Now, in humbler, happier lot,
This is all remembered not;
And now, alas the poor sprite is
Imprisoned, for some fault of his,
In a body like a grave:—
From you he only dares to crave,
For his service and his sorrow,
A smile today, a song tomorrow (lines 31-42).

In fact, the entire poem can be treated as an expression of Shelley's belief in 're-birth' or what the Hindus call *punarjanma*. For, tracing the second birth of an Apennine tree in the form of a guitar, the poet says:

; and so this tree,—
O that such our death may be—
Died in sleep, and felt no pain,
To live in happier form again:

Apart from the theory of Metempsychosis, another Hindu thought that seems to have appealed to Shelley very profoundly is mortality of the embodied individuals (i.e. the death of the individual bodily forms, and not that of the souls inhabiting those bodies) and the transcendental eternity of the Ultimate Reality called Brahma. Shelley gives vent to this metaphysical thought of the Hindus very competently in the fifty-second stanza of his pastoral elegy *Adonais*. I cite here the relevant lines:

The One remains, the many change and pass
Heaven's light forever shines, Earth's shadows fly
Life, like a dome of many coloured glass
Stains the white radiance of Eternity
Until Death tramples it to fragments.

Here, the term 'the One' refers to 'Brahma' and the term 'the many' stands for the perishable world of individual beings. Similarly, 'Life' stands for what Hindus call seductive *Māyā*, having a rope of 3 strings of the 3 *guṇas* which are responsible for the variety and multiplicity that we see all around ourselves and the expression 'the white radiance of Eternity' is what the Hindu's call '*ātmatattva*' which is one and indivisible but appears to be divided, varied and multiplied owing to the magic of *Māyā*. The dome- imagery, used by Shelley here, is, in all probability, inspired by the sixty-first verse of the eighteenth chapter of the *Gītā*. The verse runs as follows:

ईश्वरः सर्वभूतानां हृद्देशेऽर्जुन तिष्ठति।
भ्रामयन्सर्वभूतानि यंत्रारुढानि मायया।।

Īsvaraḥ sarvabhūtānaṁ hṛddeśe'rjuna tiṣṭhati
bhrāmayan sarvabhūtāni yantrārūḍhāni māyayā.

In the prose version of Wilkins, available to Shelley, it read thus:[26]

> Eeswar abides in the hearts of all beings, O Arjoon!, revolving them in different world, who are mounted on the universal wheel of time.

A similar image has been used in *Shvetāshvataropaniṣad* 1.4 which, in the English translation of Robert Ernest Humes reads thus:[27]

> We understand him (as a wheel) with one felly, with a triple tire,
> With sixteen end-parts, fifty spokes, twenty counter spokes,
> With six sets of three different paths, whose one illusion (moha) has two conditioning causes.

The fifty-fourth stanza of *Adonais* is also suffused with Vedāntic philosophy quite like the poem's Stanza 52 as I have shown above. It recalls to our minds many passages of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, scattered in the work's different chapters, describing the powers of God, for example, Verses 7-13 of Chapter 7; Verses 4-18 of Chapter 9; practically the whole of Chapter 10; Verses 36-43 of Chapter 11 and specially Verses 12-15 of Chapter 15. I quote the stanza first:

> That Light whose smile kindles the Universe
> That Beauty in which all things work and move
> That Benediction which the eclipsing Curse
> Of birth can quench not, that sustaining Love
> Which through the web of being blindly wove
> By man and beast and earth and air and sea
> Burns bright or dim, as each are mirrors of
> The Fire for which all thirst; now beams on me,
> Consuming the last clouds of cold mortality.

Now I quote the twelfth verse of the fifteenth chapter of the Hindu scripture which is, I believe, subsumed in the stanza from *Adonais*:

यदादित्यगतं तेजो जगद्भासयतेऽखिलम्।
यच्चन्द्रमसि यच्चाग्नौ ततेजो विद्धि मामकम्।।

yadādityagataṁ tejo jagadbhāṣayate'khilam
yaccandrmasi yaccāgnau tat tejo viddhi māmakam.

Wilkins had rendered it thus:[28]

> Know that the light which proceedeth from the sun and illumineth the whole world, and the light which is in the moon, and in the fire, are mine.

According to Shelley, it is the smile of the Light embodied (i.e. God or Brahma) that kindles the entire Universe which in its turn is occupied by Him, and Lord Krishna says precisely the same thing in the passage from the *Gītā* just cited: the light that kindles the world and is in the sun, the moon and the fire, is His (the Parabrahma personified). The same Vedāntic thought pervades and propels the forty-third stanza of *Adonais* which should be quoted for its sheer loveliness:

> He is a portion of the loveliness
> Which once he made more lovely: he doth bear
> His part, while the one Spirit's plastic stress
> Sweeps through the dull dense world, compelling there
> All new successions to the forms they wear
> Torturing the unwilling dross that checks its flight
> To its own likeness, as each mass may bear:
> And bursting in its beauty and its might
> From trees and beasts and men into the Heaven's light.

Just as the pastoral elegy *Adonais* in its numerous passages contains Vedāntic philosophy, the great poem 'Mont Blanc' (1816) also supplies ample evidence of Shelley's fascination with that school; there are many passages in the poem which are saturated with Vedāntic thought, to be found conveniently in the Upanishads.[29] Consider, for example, the following lines with which the third section of the poem begins:

Some say that gleams of a remoter world
Visit the soul in sleep—that death is slumber
And that its shapes the busy thoughts outnumber
Of those who wake and live.—I look on high;
Has some unknown omnipotence unfurled
The veil of life and death? or do I lie
In dream, and does the mightier world of sleep
Spread far around and inaccessibly
Its circles? For the very spirit fails,
Driven like a homeless cloud from steep to steep
That vanishes among the viewless gales!

The passage records the poet's sense of bewilderment at the sight of Mont Blanc. The poet feels as if he were seeing some dream in sleep for only sleep provides the soul with such scenes as one cannot possibly see in wakeful life. Here, the poet clearly drives at the thought that the world of sleep is far richer than the world of waking because in the former truths regarding the mysteries of life and death are revealed to some blessed souls. The clause 'Some say', in all probability, refers to the Hindu sages of the Upanishads, according to whom it is better to sleep than to wake; dream is better than sleep; but unconsciousness or death is the best of all the states. The thought is essentially Hindu and reached the West through N.B. Halhed's *Gentoo Laws* (1774) where the 4 states of the soul have been mentioned in a footnote in the 'Preface'.[30] The footnote information provided by Halhed was noticed by a reviewer of the *Gentoo Laws* whose comments appeared in the *Annual Register* for 1782.[31] The Hindu thought was known both to Coleridge and Wordsworth[33] and of course to Shelley as the present passage demonstrates. Perhaps, Shelley was acquainted with the description of the state of dreaming in *Brihad-Āraṇyaka Upanishad* (4.3. 9-18). The thirteenth verse of the chapter is very relevant to Shelley's tenor of thought in 'Mont Blanc'. In the English translation of Hume, the Upanishad passage reads:[34]

In the state of sleep going aloft and alow,

> A god, he makes many forms for himself—
> Now, as it were, enjoying pleasure with women,
> Now, as it were, laughing, and even beholding fearful sights.

Both passages—the passage from Mont Blanc and the passage from the *Brihadāraṇyaka Upanishad* clearly state that the state of dream is far richer than the waking state because the soul visualizes such scenes in the former state as defy all imagining and are extremely extraordinary. That Shelley was a *vedāntin*, pure and simple, is quite evident from the ontological thought expressed in his prose fragment called 'On Life'. I cite his characteristic statement which decisively proves that he was a monist, an *advaitin*, believing in the One Reality called Brahma:

> The view of life presented by the most refined deductions of the intellectual philosophy is that of unity. Nothing exists but as it is perceived. The difference is merely nominal between those two classes of thought which are vulgarly distinguished by the names of ideas and of external objects.[35]

In Shelley's considered opinion, there is only one reality in the world and it is the mind; matter essentially does not exist; it exists only because the mind perceives it so. This is precisely what the Advait Vedānta philosophy of India, founded by Ādi Shankarāchārya, proclaims by the famous formula—
ब्रह्म सत्यं, जगन्मिथ्या (*Brahma satyaṁ Jaganmithyā*—
God is real, the world unreal).

I proceed now to discuss certain passages in the poetic works of Shelley which have been directly influenced by the great literary classics of India (all belonging to the greatest poet of that country—Kālidāsa) that were available in England of Shelley's age in their English and Latin versions. It should be placed on record here that as early as 1789 the greatest Sanskrit drama namely, *Abhijnānṡākuntalam* had been made available to the West in its Latin translation by Sir William Jones under the title *Çacontala*: 1 year later,

the same scholar had published the play's English version. And in 1813, another English Orientalist—H.H. Wilson—came out with an English rendering of Kālidāsa's lyrical poem *Meghadūtam* ('The Cloud Messenger'). Both the works seem to have fascinated Shelley who most lovingly employed some of the most moving images of these works in his poems. The opening verse-paragraph of *Alastor* recalls a passage from Kālidāsa's *Raghuvansam* II which seems to have fascinated Shelley:

अमुं पुरः पश्यसि देवदारुं पुत्रीकृतोऽसौ वृषभध्वजेन।
यो हेमकुम्भस्तननिःसृतानां स्कन्दस्य मातुः पयसां रसज्ञः।।
कण्डूयमानेन कटं कदाचिद्वन्यद्विपेनोन्मथिता त्वगस्य।
अथैनमद्रेस्तनया शुशोच सेनान्यमालीदमिवासुरास्त्रैः।।

amuṁ puraḥ paśyasi devadāruṁ, putrīkṛto'sau
bṛṣabhadhvajaena,
yo hemakumbhastananiḥsṛtānaṁ skandasya mātuḥ
payasāṁ rasajnaḥ
kandūyamānena kataṁ kadācid vanyadvipenonmathitā
tvagasya
athainamadrestanayā śuśoca senānyamāliḍhamivāsur-
āstraiḥ)

(Yonder Deodar that thou seest before, has been adopted as a son by the bull-bannered god (i.e. Shiva), and has (since) become capable of appreciating the flavour of Skanda's mother's milk, flowing out of her breasts resembling golden jars. On one occasion, the bark of this tree was peeled off by a wild elephant, while scratching his temples against it and on that account the daughter of the mountain (Himālaya) deeply bemoaned it as she would do Skanda (leader of the army of gods), wounded by the missiles of the demons.)

It seems that portions of the *Raghuvanśam* had reached the hands of Shelley in their English translation by some Orientalist and that they included the episode concerning the dialogue between Dilīp and the lion. In any event, the passage from 'The Sensitive Plant' which I shall cite shortly has

a very great affinity with the verses from the epic of Kālidāsa, cited above.

Whenever I read 'The Cloud', one of the 3 best known lyrics of Shelley, I am invariably reminded of Kālidāsa's *Meghadūtam* whose English translation by the great Orientalist, H.H. Wilson had appeared first in 1813 at Calcutta and then one year later in London. Since 'The Cloud' was written in 1820, there is every likelihood of Shelley's having read Wilson's translation of Kālidāsa's poem. Lines 67-68 of 'The Cloud' recall to my mind Kālidāsa's characterization of the cloud as 'धूमज्योतिःसलिलमरुतां सन्निपातः' (*Dhūmajyotiḥsalilamarutāṁ sannipataḥ*) i.e. the aggregated form of smoke, light, water, and wind, in the fifth stanza of the first part of *Meghadūtam*. The lines of Shelley's poem read:

> The triumphal arch through which I march
> With hurricane, fire and snow,
> When the Powers of the air are chained to my chair,
> Is the million-coloured bow:

Kālidāsa's great creation Shakuntalā seems to have made a tremendous appeal to Shelley's imagination in *Alastor*. Describing the rapport established by the hero of his poem with the wild animals and birds such as doves, squirrels and antelopes, Shelley says:

> He would linger long
> In lonesome vales, making the wild his home,
> Until the doves and squirrels would partake
> From his innocuous hand his bloodless food,
> Lured by the gentle meaning of his looks
> And the wild antelope, that starts when'er
> The dry leaf rustles in the brake, suspend
> Her timid steps to gaze upon a form
> More graceful than her own (lines 98-106).

Shelley, as I have mentioned earlier had all the works of Jones, and he seems to have been deeply impressed by Jone's translation of Kālidāsa's *Abhijnānaśākuntalam*, par-

ticularly by the following speech of Shakuntala, addressed to Dushyanta (Dushmant in the version of Jones):[36]

> At that instant a little fawn, which I had reared as my own child, approached thee; and thou saidst with benevolence: 'Drink, thou first, gentle fawn.' He would not drink from the hand of a stranger but received water eagerly from mine when thou saidst with increasing affection: 'Thus every creature loves ...'

The same passage from *Sacontala* seems to have inspired the following passage from 'The Sensitive Plant':

> She lifted their heads with her tender hands,
> And sustained them with rods and osier bands:
> If the flowers has been her own infants, she
> Could never have nursed them more tenderly
> (lines 37-44, Part I).

But the verses from Kālidāsa's *Raghuvaṅśam*, Canto II. 36-37, which I have cited earlier, are closer to Shelley's tenor of thought in 'The Sensitive Plant': The context is that King Dilīpa has gone to the valley of the Himalayas to graze Vashishtha's cow Nandinī. The latter has been pounced upon by a lion, who, when challenged by the king, reveals to him his real identity (speaking in a human voice). The lion makes the speech that I have already cited.

Let a sensitive and honest reader decide whether or not the Indian poem is at the root of the English poem.

It must be borne in mind here that the German poet and dramatist as also historian and literary critic—Johann Christoph Friedrich von Schiller (1759–1805) had borrowed the idea of the cloud serving as the messenger of the heroine of his famous play *Maria Stuart* (1800) from Kālidāsa's poem,[37] as Macdonell maintained and since Shelley had been a student of the works of Schiller, he is very likely to have found the translation by Wilson of the Sanskrit poem quite fascinating indeed.

The students and lovers of Shelley's poetry will be delighted a great deal to know that the central thought of the

'Ode to the West Wind' (1819), namely, the West Wind is at once a destroyer and a preserver, is of Hindu origin. A Western scholar[38] has recently argued quite convincingly that for the idea, just stated, Shelley is indebted to India where Īshvara or Shankara is represented both as a destroyer as well as a preserver—he is both Shiva and Rudra—a benign as well as a terrible god. Shelley too conceives the West Wind in his supreme ode in 2 aspects—the West Wind of autumn (corresponding to Shiva's form as Rudra) and the West Wind of spring (akin to Shiva's form as Shankara or the benign Lord). The English poet who knew Kam Deo, the Indian god of love, knew a great deal about Shiva via Jones and Southey and Moor.[39]

To conclude, we can be rest assured after a perusal of the argument put forward in the preceding paragraphs of this chapter that Shelley was an ardent lover of Indian philosophy, mythology, and cultural traditions, and that he had assimilated the true spirit of India in his poetic mind. The various images of India, scattered throughout his poetry, right from his immature age to his last days, compel us to explore the field on a larger scale and in a more systematic manner. The labour involved, I am quite sure, will be amply rewarded. Late Professor Wilson Knight had rightly highlighted the Indian aspect of Shelley's poetry but the majority of Shelley scholars sadly choose to ignore it. Cameron, Sola Pinto, and John Drew[40] should be thanked for having furthered this study, especially the last who has presented a very detailed interpretation of *Prometheus Unbound* in the light of Indian philosophy, religion and mythology, regarding Demogorgon as the Indian god Neilnāga or Sheshanāga. British and American scholars who trace the philosophhical and religious elements in the poetry of Shelley to Plato and Plotinus should note that both these Greek philosophers were indebted to the Upanishads directly or indirectly for their metaphysical speculations; nobody should forget the fact that the founder of Greek philosophy, namely, Pythagoras, had come to India and had received instruction at the feet of the Indian sages.[41]

Notes and References

1. G. Wilson Knight, *The Starlit Dome: Studies in the Poetry of Vision*, Oxford University Press, London, 1971, p. 210. First published 1941.
2. Vide Southey's letter to William Taylor in *Memoir of ... the Late Taylor of Norwich*, edited by J.W. Robberds in 2 volumes, Vol. I, p. 359.
3. Fredrick, Jones, (ed.), *Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, in 2 volumes, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1910, Vol. II, p. 361 and *n.* 5.
4. See Kenneth Neill Cameron's excellent book on Shelley entitled *Shelley The Golden Years*, Harvard University Press, Massachusetts, 1971.
5. *Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 101, letter no. 82.
6. Ibid., p. 112, letter no. 87.
7. Alexander Dow had expounded Indian philosophy and mythology in detail in his very scholarly 'Preface' to his work entitled *The History of Hindostan*, 3 vols., London, 1768–72. Except for the Hindu history portion of the book, Dow's *History* was the translation of the Muslim historian Farishta, belonging to the reign of Jahangir, who was famous as an honest and objective writer. See Chapter 3 of this book for further details.
8. Sir Charles Wilkins has the distinction of being the first European who translated a Sanskrit text (in this case) the *Bhagavad-Gītā* from the original into English prose. His translation was published under the aegis of the English East India Company, at the recomendation of the first Governor-General of British India, at London in 1785. Wilkins had also translated the collection of Sanskrit stories entitled *Hitopadesha*. A booklet of Sanskrit grammar is also attributed to him.
9. Sir William Jones came to India as a judge at the Calcutta High Court and became the founder president of the Asiatic Society of Bengal. His presidential addresses dealt with various aspects of India and other Asian countries. He also wrote a number of hymns addressed to various gods and goddesses of the Hindus. But his greatest work was the translation of Kālidāsa's drama *Abhijnānaśākuntalam* first in Latin

and then in English. Inspired by this English translation entitled *Sacontala or the Fatal Ring* (Latin translation 1789, English translation, 1790), the German scholar Forster made a German translation of Kālidāsa's famous play which inspired Goethe to lyrical flights: the German poet's tribute to the Sanskrit play are very famous. The English version of Goethe's eulogy runs as follows:

> Wouldst thou the young year's blossoms
> and the fruits of its decline,
> And all by which the soul is charmed, enraptured
> feasted, fed,
> Wouldst thou the earth and Heaven in one sole
> name combine?
> I name thee, O Sakontala, and all at once
> is said.

Jones also translated Kālidāsa's *Ṛtusaṁhāra*, the Sanskrit law-book *Manusmṛti* and 2 Upanishads: *Iśāvaśyopanisad* and *MaitrīUpanishad*. Jones's works were collected and edited by Lord Teignmouth in 13 volumes, London, 1807, and by Lady Jones in 6 volumes, London, 1799. Shelley had got all the volume edited by Teignmouth. This is clear from his letter no. 218 (in *Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*), edited by Fredrick L. Jones, Clarenden Press, Oxford, 1964, p. 344.

10. Thomas Maurice was a Christian minister and an Indologist of fame. He is best noted for his high appreciation of Indian culture presented in 9 volumes of *Indian Antiquities* (1791–97) and more importantly in *A History of Hindostan* in 2 volumes (1793–94). His *History of Hindostan* was a favourite book of S.T. Coleridge. See John Livingston Lowes, *The Road to Xanadu*, London, 1927, pp. 33-34, 379-84 for a confirmation of this point. Shelley may also have read this book with profit.
11. Francis Wilford was a member of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, and a regular contributor to the main organ of that society, namely, *Asiatic Researches*. His research article entitled 'Origin and Decline of the Christian Religion in India' had appeared in the tenth volume of the *Asiatic Researches*. In this article Wilford had argued that the Indian Caucasus (Hindukush) could supply the origin of the Promethean

myth as also the origin of other myths concerning the origin of mankind. Shelley seems to have read this article by Wilford.

12. Edward Moor was a member of the Asiatic Society of Bengal and also of the Literary Society of Bombay. He is chiefly noted for his work on Indian mythology entitled *The Hindu Pantheon*, Fleet Street, London, 1810. It must be noted that 'The Hindu Pantheon' was only the sub-title of Moor's famous book; the main title of the book was
which was printed in the original Devanagari script. Both Shelley and Keats had read this book avidly. In his letter no. 218, Shelley says he had placed orders for Moor's *Hindu Pantheon*. See *LPBS*, Vol. I, p. 344.
13. *The Curse of Kehama* is Robert Southey's epic, using the Hindu mythology on a very grand scale. It was published in London in 1810, the year that had seen the publication of Edward Moor's *Hindu Pantheon*. It was Shelley's favourite book and it had fired young Shelley's imagination.
14. Shelley's letter no. 82 in *LPBS*, Vol. II, p. 102 already referred to; see *n*. 5 above.
15. See *The Geography of Strabo*, translated by H.L. Jones, 8 volumes, London, 1928, Vol. 3.
16. See George Woodcock, *The Greeks in India*, Faber and Faber, London, 1966, p. 21. Woodcock believes the modern Kafirs are the descendents of the Nysans Alexander had met. The Classical authority for this equation of the Nysans and the Kafirs is Quintus Curtius. See Woodcock, p. 22 for details.
17. Kenneth Neil Cameron, *Shelley: The Golden Years*, op. cit., p. 291.
18. Ibid., p. 291. His authority on the issue is Sylva Norman's valuable volume *After Shelley: The Letters of Thomas Jefferson Hogg to Jane Williams*, New York, 1938, pp. xv-xvi.
19. The verse cited here is from
(Devyaparādha-Kṣamāpanstotram, see the last line of the first stanza). देव्यपराधक्षमापनस्तोत्र
20. See Hastings' own admission in his letter to Nathaniel Smith, Chairman of the East India Company, recommending to him the manuscript of Charles Wilkins's *Gītā*. The letter is included in Wilkins's *Geeta*, London, 1785, p.11. Wilkins says that he has translated a small portion of the *Mahābhārata*

through the medium of another language (perhaps Persian). This letter of Hastings was written from 'Banaris' (now Varanasi) and is dated 4 October 1784.

21. Wilkins, *The Bhagavat-Geeta*, p. 88.
22. That the *Gītā* in Wilkins's prose version was the subject of live discussions among the scholars and men of letters in England is clear from the book-reviews of it in the popular magazines of the day such as the *Monthly Review* Lxxvi (1789) and the *British Critic* III, February 1794, p. 154 and p. 176 and *British Critic* VIII, November 1796, p. 541 and from the fact that William Blake had made a drawing of Charles Wilkins, portraying him as an Indian Brahmin engaged in the process of translating the *Gītā*. (The painting was item no. 10 of the *Descriptive Catalogue*) as also from the fact that Southey refers to the *Bhagavat-Geeta* in the 'Preface' to his Hindu epic *The Curse of Kehama* and mentions the Hindu text several times in his footnotes to the text of his Hindu epic. Even Coleridge quoted 3 long pages from it in his philosophical lecture (Vide *The Philosophical Lectures of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*) edited by Kathleen Coburn, Pilot Press Ltd., 1749, pp. 127-29.
23. Wilkins, *Bhagavat-Geeta*, op. cit., p. 37.
24. Ibid., p. 108.
25. *Phaedo* 73-77 and *Phaedrus* 249. Both the dialogues can be conveniently found in their English version facing the original Greek text in *Plato with an English translation* containing *Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Phaedo* and *Phaedrus* by Harold North Fowler, William Heinemann, London, 1926, pp. 253-71 and p. 481.
26. Wilkins, *Bhagavat-Geeta*, op. cit., p. 133.
27. See *The Thirteen Principal Upanishad* translated by Robert Ernest Hume, Oxford University Press, London, 1921, revised ed. 1971.
28. Wilkins, *Bhagavat-Geeta*, op. cit., p. 113.
29. Shelley had read at least *Īshopaniṣad* and *Maitri Upanishad*. This is clear from the fact that Jones had translated these two Upanishads in English and Shelley had all the works of Jones.

    Moreover, the Latin translation of fifty Upanishads done by Anquetil Duperron in 2 volumes had appeared in 1801–02

at Strassburg and Levrault. Furthermore, Henry Thomas Colebrooke had translated *Aitareya Upanishad* in his essay 'On the Vedas or the Sacred Writings of the Hindus' which was published in the eighth volume of the *Asiatic Researches*, Calcutta, 1805, pp. 421-25.

30. N.B. Halhed, *Code of Gentoo Laws*, London, 1774, p. xxxv (footnote on the same page).
31. *Annual Register*, 182, pp. 31-39.
32. S.T. Coleridge, in his letter to Thelwall dated 14 October 1797 in which he calls the concept 'the Brahman Creed'. 'It is better to sit than to stand, it is better to lie than to sit; it is better to sleep than to wake—but Death is the best of all.'
33. See *Excursion* III. 270-79 where we come across the following lines:

> If I must take my choice between the pair
> That rule alternately the weary hours,
> Night is than day more acceptable; sleep
> Doth, in my estimate of good, appear

34. Robert Ernest Hume, *The Thirteen Upanishads*, op. cit., p. 135.
35. Shelley's essay 'On Life' in *Works*, VI *The Complete Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, edited by Ingpen and Walter E. Pec, Scribner, London, 10 volumes, 1926–30, p. 196.
36. Sir William Jones, *Sacontala*, 1790, p. 61.
37. A.A. Macdonell, *History of Sanskrit Literature*, London and Oxford; 1900, p. 335.
38. Donald H. Reiman and Sharon B. Powers, *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, Norton, New York, 1977, p. 221, where the authors make the following comment:

> These titles (i.e. 'Destroyer' and 'Preserver' come directly from the titles of the Hindu gods, Siva the Destroyer and Vishnu the Preserver—known to Shelley from both the translations and writings of Shelley from both the translations and writings of Sir William Jones and Edward Moor's *Hindu Pantheon* (1810).

But my argument that the 2 titles of the West Wind are those of Lord Shiva who is both Destroyer and Preserver as His names 'Shankar' and 'Rudra' clearly suggest, is closer to

the spirit of Shelley's poem because there the 2 titles belong to one and the same being—the West Wind.

39. Shelley knew a great deal about the Hindu gods and goddesses; this is quite clear from his reference to 'Camdeo' in his letter to Hogg (vide *n.* 6 above). We must always bear in mind the fact that he had ordered a copy of Edward Moor's *Hindu Pantheon* as early as 1812 (Vide *LPBS*, Letter 216, I, 342. Moreover, *The Curse of Kehama* and Jones's writings, too, had supplied him a lot of information regarding Hindu thought and mythology.
40. For Wilson Knight's stress on the Indian element in the poetry of Shelley, see *n.* 1 above. Cameron's acknowledgement of the intellectual debts that Shelley owed to India, see his *Shelley; The Golden Years*, mentioned in *n.* 4 above, where he discusses the philosophical concepts involved in 'Mont Blanc' Cameron clearly maintains there: 'The concept originally came from Indian philosophy.' For V. de Sola Pinto's opinion on the subject see 'Sir William Jones and English Literature', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, University of London, XI, 4 (1946), p. 688. And for John Drew vide his eminent book *India and the Romantic Imagination*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1987; Chapter Seven is entirely devoted to a discussion of Shelley's indebtedness to India.
41. I think Leopold von Schroeder's views expressed in *Pythagoras und die Inder* (Leipzig, 1884), Chapters I-III on the issue are decisive and incontrovertible.

India and Indian Thought in the Poetry of John Keats with Special Reference to the *Bhagavad-Gītā*

John Keats has been projected for long as a pure artist, wholly dedicated to his profession of creating beauty through words. The advocates of this view argue very strongly that the imagination was the only goddess that Keats knew and worshipped. Allied to this is another image of Keats—that of the thoroughly British poet who was insular to outside influence, deriving inspiration and sustenance from native sources only. However, both of these views regarding Keats are false and groundless. It cannot be gainsaid that Keats was a true artist and a perfect poet of beauty. But, then, he was also a truly religious man, with a holy mind and a pure heart, worshipping not only the goddess of the Imagination but also other gods such as Apollo and Bacchus. And though by birth, he was a Briton, he was very catholic and broad in his outlook, prone to borrow noble thoughts and ideas from all possible sources. His friend and well-wisher—P.B. Shelley—called him a Greek and with enough justification; the apellation stands justified on the ground that Greek mythology was the one field where Keats found his heart's desires fully realized. The Greek aspect of Keats has been generally recognized but one other dimension of his poetry and philosophy has gone blissfully unstressed and unacknowledged and that is the Indian aspect of his writings.

India was not unknown to Keats: the glamour of the country had captivated his mind and soul. How ardent and en-

thusiastic Keats was about India becomes crystal-clear from his letter to Miss Jeffrey of Teignmouth, Devon, that the poet wrote from Wentworth Place, Hampstead, on 31 May 1819. In this letter Keats confessed with utmost honesty and sincerity:[1]

> I have the choice, as it were, of two Poisons (yet I ought not to call this a Poison) the one is voyaging to and from India for a few years; the other is leading a feverous life along with Poetry—This latter will suit me best: for I cannot resolve to give up my studies.

Maurice Buxton Forman, the editor of Keats' 'letters', comments on the aforesaid letter (on the expression 'voyaging to and from India') in the following words:[2]

> The idea was to become a surgeon on a ship to the East Indiés, an idea possibly derived from Haydon's medical adviser, Dr Darling, who had held such an appointment; it was revived later, see Letter 212 to Dilke, written some months before Keats left for Italy.

Perhaps, this proposed voyage to India is what Keats had in mind when he wrote to his sister Fanny, living in Welt-thamstaw, on 26 May 1819:[3]

> Mind I do not propose to quit England, as George (h)as done; but I am affraid (sic) I shall be forced to take a voyage or two. However, we will not think of that for some months.

In his Letter Number 212, addressed to Charles Wentworth Dilke, dated May 1 1820, to which Forman calls our attention, Keats wrote:[4]

> I have my choice of three things—or at least two—South America or Surgeon to an I(n)diaman—which last I think will be my fate—I shall resolve in a few days.

It seems that the thought of serving as a surgeon on an Indiaman was haunting Keats' mind, for on 9 June 1819, he wrote to Miss Jeffrey again:[5]

> Your advice about the Indiaman is a very wise advice, because it just suits me, though you are a little in the wrong concerning its destroying the energies of Mind: on the contrary, it would be the finest thing to strengthen them—To be thrown among people who care not for you, with whom you have no sympathies, forces the Mind upon its own resources and leaves it free to make its speculations of the differences of human character and to class them with the calmness of a Botanist. An Indiaman is a little world.

The word 'Indiaman' occurs again in the same letter a few sentences later. In another letter, addressed to Fanny Keats, dated 9 June 1819, the very day he had written to Miss Jeffrey, Keats wrote from Wentworth Place:[6]

> I have given up the idea of the Indiaman; I cannot resolve to give up my favourite Studies; so I propose to retire into the country and set my Mind at work once more.

I feel fully convinced that Keats was deeply interested in British affairs in India. He makes a reference to the notorious event that took place at Calcutta in 1756, i.e. the episode known as 'the Black Hole Tragedy' which led to the sacking of Siraj-ud-daula's Bengal by the British East India Company, under the leadership of Clive. Keats refers to this event in his long letter to Georgiana Keats, the wife of his younger brother George, dated Thursday 13-Friday 28 January 1820:[7]

> This is a beautiful day: I hope you will not quarrel with it if I call it an American one. The sun comes upon the snow and makes a prettier candy than we have on twelfth-cakes. George is busy this morning in making copies of my verses. He is making now one of an Ode to the nightingale, which is like reading an account of the B(l)ack hole at Calcutta on an ice bergh.

The measure of Keats' knowledge about India and all that she stands for—her philosophy and religion—is the fact that

he knew some of the doctrines of Buddhism which was the least known of the Indian religions in his day. In his letter to his friend John Hamilton Reynolds, dated 19 February 1818, he wrote:[8]

> I had an idea that a Man might pass a very pleasant life in this manner—let him on certain day read a certain page of full Poesy or distilled Prose; and let him wander with it, and muse upon it, and reflect upon it, and dream upon it, until it becomes stale—but when will it do so? Never. When Man has arrived at a certain ripeness in intellect, any one grand and spiritual passage serves him as a starting post towards all the 'two-and-thirty Palaces'. How happy is such a voyage of conception, what delicious diligent Indolence.

Forman's gloss on the expression 'two-and-thirty Palaces' reads:[9] 'The thirty-two "palaces of delight" of the Buddhist doctrine.' The learned editor, however, does not specify the 'doctrine' to which Keats alludes. Harold Bloom and Lionel Trilling, too, fail to specify the doctrine concerned.[10] I think that the poet is alluding to the 32 signs of really great souls, pointers to their divinity: these have been called '*dvātrinshat Mahāpurusha-Lakshanāni*' in Buddhist texts in Sanskrit, dealing with the life of Lord Buddha such as *Lalitavistara* and *Buddhacharita*. Each of these signs can be regarded as a palace of delight. Keats may have found it in Edward Moor's *Hindu Pantheon* (1810) which had supplied the English readers with some information regarding Buddha and the legends connected with him. In any event, the allusion demonstrates Keats's awareness of the philosophical and religious ideas of India, disseminated in the West through the works of such Orientalists as Sir William Jones, Charles Wilkins, and Colebrooke. That he had a fair knowledge of the basic tenets of Hinduism becomes evident from a perusal of his letter, addressed to George and Georgiana Keats—the largest letter that he wrote in the course of several days (Sunday 14 February–Monday 3 May 1819). In this letter he

evinces his knowledge of the Hindu doctrine of the descendence of the Godhead on the earth known as '*Avatārvāda*' when he says:[11]

> It is pretty generally suspected that the Chr(i)stian scheme has been coppied (sic) from the ancient Persian and Greek philosophers. Why may they not have made this simple thing even more simple for common apprehension by introducing Mediators and Personages in the same manner as *in the he [a] then mythology abstractions are personified*—seriously I think it probable that this system of Soul-making—may have been the parent of all the palpable and personal scheme of Redemption, among the Zoroastrians, the Christians and the *Hindoos*. For as one part of the human species must have their carved Jupiter; so another part must have the palpable and named Mediator and Saviour, their Christ their Oromanes and their *Vishnu* (emphasis added).

In the first italicized statement in the above quotation, i.e. 'in the he (a) then mythology abstractions are personified', Keats is, in all probability, referring to the tendency of the Vedic seers to personify abstractions, e.g. intelligent speech as 'Vāgdevatā', the natural factor responsible for rains as 'Indra', cosmic wisdom as 'Brahmā', medical science as 'Ashvinīkumāra' and so on. He rightly calls this tendency of the Vedas which he designates as 'he [a] then mythology' 'the parent of all the more palpable and personal schemes of Redemption'. It is needless to assert here that the entire Greek mythology as well as the entire Pauranic mythology of India can be and has been traced to *Vedas*.[12] The use of the words 'Hindoo' and 'Vishnu' is proof positive of the fact that our poet was fairly acquainted with the religious beliefs and practices of India, including her mythology. The way he uses the word 'Vishnu' shows that he knew full well that Vishnu is the saviour god of the Hindus, who had descended on the earth 9 times in the past for the protection of the righteous

and the destruction of the vicious and will appear once more as 'Kalki', the tenth *avatāra*. As an extra proof of Keats's knowledge of the Hindu Pantheon, I should like to call the attention of the readers to lines 239–67 of the fourth book of the *Endymion*, describing the progress of Bacchus's civilizing campaign all over the world, from Egypt to India. In line 265, the poet alludes to Bacchus's victory over Brahmā. I quote the relevant portion of the description, put in the mouth of the Indian maid who sings:

I saw Osirian Egypt kneel adown
  Before the vine-wreath crown
I saw parched Abyssinia rouse and sing
  To the silver cymbals' ring
I saw the whelming vintage hotly pierce
  Old Tartary the fierce
The kings of Ind their jewel-sceptres vail,
And from their treasures scatter pearled hail.
Great Brahma from his mystic heaven groans,
  And all his priesthood moans;
Before young Bacchus' eye-wink turning pale.

Evidently, Keats knew that Brahmā is a member of the Hindu trinity or *Trimūrti*, consisting of Brahmā himself, Vishnu and Mahesha or Shankara. From his reference to Brahmā's 'mystic heaven' it is clear that he was aware of the fact that each member of the Hindu trinity had his own heaven called 'Loka'—Brahmloka, Vishnuloka and Shivaloka. And if Bacchus is none other than Shiva, as Sir William Jones had argued,[13] then it is quite possible that the poet was exploiting in the passage concerned the myth according to which Shiva had once vanquished Brahmā in the form of 'Daksha-Prajāpati'. Moreover, in the last but one line of the quotation given here the expression 'his priesthood' suggests the poet's acquaintance with the fact that the priestly class in India called 'Brāhmaṇas' derives its direct lineage from Brahmā just as the warrior class called 'Kshatriyas' asserts that it is descended either from the sun or from the moon,

and is therefore, designated either as 'Sūryavanshī' or 'Chandravanshī'.

References to India and things Indian in the poetry of Keats are numerous indeed. In the seventh line of the quotation given here itself India has been mentioned by another of its names: 'Ind' which is a diminutive form of 'India'. The poem 'The Cap and the Bells; or, The Jealousies: A Fairy Tale-Unfinished' (written November-December 1819) is full of allusions to Indian objects and things. In fact, the poem is Indian through and through. It opens with these words: 'In midmost Ind, beside Hydaspes cool', containing India's diminutive name 'Ind' and the name of one of her famous rivers—'Hydapes' which is a corrupt Greek form of the word 'Vitastā', the older Sanskrit name of the modern 'Jhelum'. Though Keats has used a classical name of Jhelum, obtained from his reading of Plutarch, Strabo and Pliny and more immediately of his English predecessor—John Milton, who alludes to Hydaspes in his *Paradise Lost* Book III, line 436, his characterization of that river as 'cool' makes it clear that the poet was aware of the physical feature of Jhelum which belongs to the Indus river system and being fed by the glaciers of southern Tibet is naturally cool. The poet uses the place-name 'Tibet' in line 645 of the poem (Stanza LXXII), the Gobi desert in line 659 (Stanza LXXIV) and the Persian city 'Balk' or 'Balkh' in line 679 (Stanza LXXVI). These references demonstrate Keats' fair knowledge of the geography of India and her neighbourhood.

'The Cap and the Bells' is definitely an Indian poem, written against an Indian setting from beginning to end. In line 390 (Stanza XLIV) we have been provided in the speech of Hum the geneology of Bertha, the real flame of the Emperor Elfinan, the hero of the poem: 'She was born at midnight in an Indian wild.' Numerous other details in the poem strengthen the Indian atmosphere of the piece. The British India of the last decade of the eighteenth century has been invoked in lines 190-93 and lines 330-33. As Phyllis Mann[14] suggests, lines 190-93 contain a veiled reference to a valu-

able ring that Tipu Sultan had sent to France through his envoy with a view to winning French support for his cause (of removing the British from the Indian soil). Similarly, lines 330-33 refer to the life-size mechanical device that the Sultan of Mysore had got prepared for the mockery of the British soldiers. The device, now at the Victoria and Albert Museum, has a tiger which, when set in motion, mauls the figure of the English officer lying beneath him to the accompaniment of sounds resembling growls and cries. The device had been captured by the officers of the East India Company after the fall of Seringapatam in 1799 and housed in the public reading-room of the East India House in Leadenhall Street. Keats had seen the device for himself at Leadenhall Street and had gathered all the information regarding Tipu sultan from *The Selected Letters of Tippoo Sultan to Various Public Functionaries* (translated by W. Kirkpatrick, 1811).[15] This fact only goes to prove how deeply the poet was interested in the affairs of India.

It should be a matter of great interest as also of careful investigation if the word 'Cham' that Keats has used in 'The Cap and the Bells' as the name of Hum's father, the inventor of magic, is not ultimately derived from the Vedic word 'Shambar' which is the name of a demon who was the father of magic and black art. According to Miriam Allott, Keats's source for this word was Pierre Bayle's book entitled *Dictionaire Historique* (1695-97, revised 1702). But the poem being an Indian allegory, the derivation of 'Cham' ('Shem') from 'Shambar' is quite in place and in all probability Keats knew something about 'Shambar' though the Orientalists like Sir William Jones, Charles Wilkins and H.H. Colebrooke.

The 2 most significant natural objects of India—the Himalayas and the Ganges—seem to have made a tremendous impact on the imagination of Keats. The poet mentions the former under its Persian nomenclature of 'Imaus' in the 'Cap and Bells' several times. In line 29 (Stanza IV), Pigmio has been described as 'Imaus Sovereign'. Again, in line

164 (Stanza XIX) has the word 'Imaus': 'Will they fetch from Imaus for my wife?' The adjectival form of 'Imaus'—'Imaian' has been used in line 81 (Stanza IX) as well as in line 585 (Stanza LXV). The Ganges, the most sacred river of India, appears in 2 major poems: *Endymion* and *Hyperion*. In *Endymion* Book IV, line 33, we have in the speech of the Indian maid these words: 'Adiew to Ganges and their pleasant fields' and later in line 465 of the same book occurs the expression 'Thou swan of Ganges' for the Indian maid. In *Hyperion: A Fragment* Book II, line 60, we have 'By Oxus or in Ganges' sacred isles.'

Of things Indian Keats perhaps felt enamoured of what is called 'Bhojpatra', the skin of a tree used for writing in ancient India. Keats lovingly calls it the 'wild Indian leaf' in his second Hyperion poem *The Fall of Hyperion: A Dream*, Canto I, line 5. *Tulasī*, the most sacred plant of India, appears in the subtitle of the narrative poem 'Isabella' whose subtitle is 'the Pot of Basil', Basil being none other than the *Tulasī* plant, whose leaves have great medicinal value and are sacred to Vishnu or Krishna. Apart from Basil or *Tulasī*, the cloves and pearls of India had impressed Keats very deeply. In his 'Isabella', the poet mentions the former in the expression 'in the warm Indian clove' at line 103 (Stanza XIII) and the latter in lines 113-14 of Stanza XV:

> For them the Ceylon diver held his breath,
> And went all naked to the hungry shark;
> (Here it must be borne in mind that Ceylon was regarded in Keats's day as part of India, and not as an independent country.)

However, the greatest tribute to India paid by Keats is in the form of the creation of the character called 'Indian Maid' in his romance, *Endymion*. The lady, as the poet projects her in the poem, is the highest form of beauty; she is ultimately transformed into the moon-goddess, Cynthia. It seems to me that through the following words of *Endymion*, addressed to the Indian Maid, the poet has given expression to his own

appreciation of India and of all that India stands for: her religion, mythology and philosophy:

> My sweetest Indian, here,
> Here will I kneel, for thou redeemed hast
> My life from too thin breathing.
>
> (Book IV, line 648-50)

With this introduction to and detailed discussion of Keats's continued interest in India and Indian affairs, including her rich mythology, revealed in the poet's references to Brahmā and Vishnu and 'two and thirty palaces', it would not be presumptuous on our part to maintain that the poet had read the greatest scripture of the Hindus called *The Bhagavad-Gītā* which had become available in London in 1785 in Charles Wilkins's English prose and was the centre of contemporary debate on public platforms at the hands of brilliant intellectuals of the day like S.T. Coleridge whose public lectures our poet used to attend with great enthusiasm. His interest in the Hindu scripture must have been aroused when he heard Coleridge cite a long passage from it in Wilkins's version in his philosophical lecture at the Crown and Anchor, Strand, at 8 o'clock on 31 December 1819. Another source from which he must have derived inspiration to study the *Bhagavad-Gītā* was no doubt, Robert Southey's Indian epic 'The Curse of Kehama' (1810) whose influence on Keats's *Endymion* has been investigated in depth by Dorothy Hewlett in her book *A Life of John Keats* (New York, 1950). In the course of his reading of Southey's poem, Keats could not have missed the reference to the *Bhagavad-Gītā* in the preface to the poem and in the footnotes to the text. Since Keats's interest in India was very deep, we can rest assured that his curiosity about the most significant religious text of India was fully aroused and that he made a serious attempt at grasping the finer points of Indian philosophy enshrined in the 'Song Celestial'. I agree that Keats does not mention the *Gītā* in his writings, so far as I know them, but, then, the kind of knowledge regarding Hinduism that he displays, compels us

to maintain that he had read it thoroughly and had even imbibed some of its doctrines. Indeed, many of the ideas expressed in his poems and letters can be easily traced to the sacred book of the Hindus. I would like to discuss some of them under the following points:

(1) Keats's famous distinction between what he calls 'Intelligence' on the one hand and 'Soul' on the other, is quite close to the distinction that the Hindus still make and the *Gītā* presupposes, between *jīvātman* on the one hand and *ātman*, *paramātman* or *Brahman* on the other. Most of the Upanishads, the philosophical/mystical portions of the Vedic literature, make no distinction between *Brahman* and *ātman* in their essential nature. However, they do make a distinction between *ātman* and *jīvātman* or just *jīva*. When an *ātman* assumes a body in accordance with its karmic acts and experiences of pleasures and pains of life, it is called *jīvātman* because it is earth-bound. It may have a divine element in it, yet its prime duty is to realize its true identity which lies in its getting emancipated from the shackles of the world through the removal of *avidyā* or ignorance and the establishment of its identification with *ātman* which is hardly different from *Brahman* or *Paramātman*, the Supreme Reality. So long as an individual remains attached to the world and does not realize his or her true nature, he or she remains a *jīva* or *jīvātman*. However, the moment it is able to realize its true nature, it becomes *ātman*, free from all fears and all limitations. But it must be made very clear here that a *jīva* cannot become an *ātman* by eschewing the world and escaping from it like a coward; rather, it must face the harsh realities of life in a very detached manner in order to realize the true *ātman* residing within, unnoticed and unacknowledged. The central doctrine of the *Gītā* is directed to this end. It asks us to do our work, whatever it is, with complete detachment and utmost faith in God, the source of all life. This done, we are bound to achieve our unity with *Brahman*, our true self. Keats held, more or less, the same view of the destiny of man when he said:[16]

> The common cognomen of this world among the misguided and superstitious is 'a vale of tears' from which we are to be redeemed by a certain arbitrary interpretation of god and take to heaven—What a circumscribed and straightened notion. Call the world if you please 'The Vale of soul-making'. Then you will find out the use of the world. (I am speaking now in the highest terms for human nature admitting it to be immortal which I will here take for granted for the purpose of showing a thought which has struck me concerning it). I say 'Soul-making', Soul as distinguished from an Intelligence—There may be intelligences or the sparks of the divinity in millions—but they are not Souls till they acquire identities, till each one is personally itself. I(n)telligences are atoms of perception—they know and they see and they are pure, in short they are God—how then are souls to be made? How then are these sparks which are God to have identity given them—so as ever to possess a bliss peculiar to each one's individual existence? How, but by the medium of a world like this?

Just change the terms 'Intelligence' and 'Soul' to '*jīvātman*' and '*ātman*', respectively and his theory regarding the world and its use and the real objective of human existence will be found to be precisely identical with the Hindu world-view that has been presented above. When Keats says that intelligences are gods, what he actually means is that they are potential gods, and not realized gods; in order to be realized gods or Souls, those intelligences are required to pass through the vale of 'Soul-making', that is to say, they are required to face the problems of the world and undergo the experiences of pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow, without being affected by them at all. Keats must have found the source of his theory in the sixteenth verse of the fifteenth chapter of the *Gītā* which runs as follows:

द्वाविमौ पुरुषौ लोके क्षरश्चाक्षर एव च।
क्षरः सर्वाणि भूतानि कूटस्थोऽक्षर उच्यते।।

dvāvimau puruṣau loke kṣaraḥ cā'ksara eva ca
kśaraḥ sarvāṇi bhūtani kūtastho 'kṣara ucyate

and which Wilkins had rendered in the following words:[17]

> There are two kinds of Pooroosh in the world, the one corruptible, the other incorruptible. The corruptible Pooroosh is the body of all things in nature; the incorruptible is called Kootastha, or he who standeth on the pinnacle.

What *Gītā* calls *kṣara puruṣa* is Keats's 'intelligence' and *Gītā's akṣara puruṣa* is Keats's 'Soul'. It is very interesting to note that Robert M. Ryan has the following comment on Keats's statement cited here:[18]

> There is evidence that these ideas were commonplaces within his circle of friends. But one cannot rule out the possibility that they resulted from a recent, specific intellectual influence.

I suspect that this recent, specific intellectual influence was the *Bhagavad-Gītā* which was being discussed enthusiastically in Keats's day in England. I strongly feel that Keats did not simply use the ideas of the *Gītā* as a matter of intellectual curiosity, but also practised the system of soul-making as formulated in the *Gītā* by trying to rise above the dualities of all kinds. When he declared that praise or blame could not affect him in any way, he was actually claiming for himself the status of *Gītā's sthita-prajna yogin* who had transformed the intelligence (with which he had been born) into a Soul; in other words, he had realized the God within himself. The poet Keats articulated the notion of the stable-minded *yogin* through goddess Moneta in *The Fall of Hyperion* lines 147-49:

> 'None can usurp this height', returned that shade,
> 'But those to whom the miseries of the world
> Are misery, and will not let them rest.'

The kind of mind that, according to Moneta can reach her is one that does not believe in plurality but in unity.

Clearly, this is a form of *advaitavāda* or monist view of things, advocated by the *Gītā*.

(2) Keats seems to have been impressed by the thought expressed in the seventh verse of the fifteenth chapter of the Indian text according to which individual beings are essentially the fractions of the Godhead.

ममैवांशो जीवलोके जीवभूतः सनातनः।
मनःषष्टानीन्द्रियाणि प्रकृतिस्थानि कर्षति।।

mamaivanśo jīvaloke jīvabhūtaḥ sanatanaḥ
manaḥsaṣṭhāni 'ndriyāṇi prakṛtisthāni karṣati

Wilkins had rendered this verse thus:[19]

> It is even a portion of myself that in this animal world is the universal spirit of all things. It draweth together the five organs and the mind, which is the sixth, that it may obtain a body, and that it may leave it again.

Wilkins's rendering of the verse is not very accurate but Keats's perceptive mind must have grasped the spirit underlying the Sanskrit text. He echoes it in this famous statement of his:[20]

> As various as the Lives of Men are, so various become their souls, and thus does God make individual beings, Souls, Identical Souls of the sparks of his own essence.

In the context in which Keats makes this observation, he hints that it is the Human Heart which contains the real divinity of the individual beings. This thought, too, is derived from the *Gītā* (same chapter) which asserts that the divinity of man resides in his heart. Let us have a look at this important verse:

सर्वस्य चाहं हृदि सन्निविष्टो
मतः स्मृतिर्ज्ञानमपोहनं च।
वेदैश्च सर्वैरहमेव वेद्यो
वेदान्तकृद्वेदविदेव चाहम्।।

sarvasya cā 'haṁ hṛdi samniviṣṭo
mattaḥ smṛtir jnanam apohanaṁ ca

vedaiś ca sarvair aham eva vedyo
vedantakṛd vedavideva cā'ham Gītā XV.15

In Wilkins's English prose the verse reads:[21]

> I penetrate into the hearts of all men, and from me proceed memory, knowledge, and the loss of both. I am to be known by all the Veds or books of divine knowledge: I am he who formed the Vedant, and I am he who knoweth the Veds.

Now, if the human heart is the seat of the Godhead in man, it follows that memory, knowledge, etc., that have been described as proceeding from the Lord, actually proceed from the human heart, the seat of the Lord in man. Clearly, the greater and purer the heart in a human being, the diviner he is. Perhaps, Keats had read this meaning in the above verse of the *Gītā* and that is why he made the following observation:[22]

> Not merely is the heart a Hornbook, it is the Mind's Bible, it is the Mind's experience, it is the teat from which the Mind or intelligence sucks its identity.

I am of the firm view that the above statement of Keats is only a paraphrase of the verse of the *Gītā*, cited just now, in the idiom of the Christians. In place of the Vedas, it has Hornbook and it substitutes Vedanta by 'Mind's Bible'. True, according to Keats, the human heart is the cause of all knowledge and experience whereas in the *Gītā* it is God who is the ultimate cause of memory and knowledge. But when the Lord Himself confesses in the *Gītā* that the human heart is His dwelling place, it is not very surprising if Keats ascribes attributes of the Lord to His dwelling place—the human heart. And so far as the concept of 'Apohana' (i.e. loss of memory, knowledge, etc.) is concerned, the sense is that those who are heartless, their knowledge and learning and all other acquirements are futile. Keats's passage also implies this. Thus, there is a very close and unmistakable affinity between the *Gītā* passage and that of Keats's letter.

(3) In his last great but unfinished poem entitled *The Fall of Hyperion: A Dream*, Canto I, lines 154-60, Keats advocates work directed towards the human good as the surest path to salvation. This recalls the concept of '*lokasaṁgraha* or the maintenance of the world-order enunciated in the third chapter of the *Gītā*, especially Verse 20 in which the expression occurs specifically. Just as Keats decries the self-centred self-seekers, the *Gītā*, too, condemns such selfish people by maintaining that such a man lives in vain— 'मोघं पार्थ स जीवति' (*mogham partha sa jīvati*). Through the example of Janaka and others the *Gītā* asserts the efficacy of the work done for the well-being of mankind. Though a great king, Janaka had ploughed the land for rainfall in the interest of his subjects and had thereby attained *siddhi*, a highly exalted moral position. In likemanner, the selfless people, working for the well-being of the world, attain to the shrine of Moneta in Keats's poem, at least by implication. The poet glorifies the selfless men

> Who love their fellows even to the death;
> Who feel the giant agony of the world;
> And, more, like slaves to poor humanity,
> Labour for mortal good.

(4) The doctrine of divine descendence on the earth for the protection of the good and the destruction of the evil, called *Avatāravāda*, also, seems to have made a tremendous impact on the imagination of Keats. The theory has been propounded in the seventh and eighth verses of the fourth chapter of the *Gītā*, which read as follows:

> यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत।
> अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदात्मानं सृजाम्यहम्।।
> परित्राणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुष्कृताम्।
> धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय संभवामि युगे युगे।।

yadā yadā hi dharmasya glānir bhavati bhārata
abhyutthanam adharmasya tadā 'tmanaṁ sṛjāmyaham
paritrāṇāya sādhūnāṁ vināśāya ca duṣkṛtām
dharmasamsthāpanārthāya sambhavāmi yuge yuge

In Wilkins's prose rendering the verses read thus:[23]

> And as often as there is decline of virtue, and an insurrection of vice and injustice, in the world, I make myself evident; and thus I appear, from age to age, for the preservation of the just, the destruction of the wicked, and the establishment of virtue.

Keats uses the doctrine called *Avatārvada* as propounded in the verses of the *Gītā*, cited above, in his letter addressed to John Hamilton Reynolds, dated Sunday 3 May 1818. Comparing Milton with Wordsworth, Keats observes:[24]

> Milton, whatever he may have thought in the sequel, appears to have been content with these by his writings—He did not think into the human heart, as Wordsworth has done—Yet Milton as a Philosopher, had sure as great powers as Wordsworth—What is then to be inferr'd? O many things—*It proves there is really a grand march of intellect—, it proves that a mighty providence subdues the mightiest Minds to the service of the time being, whether it be in human knowledge or Religion* (emphasis added).

Robert M. Ryan brings out the underlying ideas of the italicized lines of the passage cited above, in the following words:[25]

> God's true religion is written in the heart, and Wordsworth, thinking into the human heart, is helping to clarify that religion and to make it triumphant. Milton was not as 'deep' as Wordsworth because he was content with the dogmas and superstitions of protestatism. Yet in his defence it can be said that he acted and thought as he had to, given the times in which he lived. His task and that of his contemporaries was to help stamp out the greater superstitions of Catholoicism—this was their unique contribution to the progress of human enlightenment; this was the special role they were assigned in God's plan. *In Keats's view, the development of*

> *theology and the development of all human thought is presided over and directed by a 'mighty providence' that raises up prophets and reformers in each age to lead mankind toward a purer and a more refined religious consciousness* (italics added).

Now, compare the theory of Keats as clarified in the italicized portion of Ryan's comments on Keats's own words with the theory of divine descendence as enunciated in the verses of the *Gītā* cited above and see if you can miss the ring of the import of Lord Krishna's consoling words in the letter of Keats to Reynolds. I am sure every sensible reader will recall without fail the thought of *yadā yadā hi dharmasya* in the course of his reading of Keats's letter if he has some acquaintance with the Indian scripture.

(5) The concept of *sthitaprajnatā* or stable-mindedness, so prominently advocated as a means to salvation, has been beautifully exploited by Keats in the following words of Oceanus, the sea-god, addressed to Saturn in the *Hyperion: A Fragment*, Book II, lines 203-06:

> Now comes the pain of truth, to whom 'tis pain—
> O folly! for to bear all naked truths,
> And to envisage circumstance, all calm,
> That is the top of sovereignty.

These words of Oceanus seem to be the dramatic expression of the philosophy of disinterestedness, so strongly recommended in the following verses of he *Bhagavad-Gītā*, Chapter II:

> दुःखेष्वनुद्विग्नमनाः सुखेषु विगतस्पृहः।
> वीतरागभयक्रोधः स्थितधीर्मुनिरुच्यते॥ 56॥
> यः सर्वत्रानभिस्नेहस्तत्तत्प्राप्य शुभाशुभम्।
> नाभिनन्दति न द्वेष्टि तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता॥ 57॥
>
> *dukhhesu anudvignamanāḥ sukheṣu vigataspṛhaḥ*
> *vita-rāga-bhaya-krodhaḥ sthitadhīr munir ucyate.* [56]
> *yaḥ sarvatrānabhisnehahas tat tat prāpya śubhāśubham*
> *nābhinandati na dveṣti tasya prajnā pratiṣṭhitā.* [57])

In Wilkins's translation these verses read as follows:[26]

> His mind is undisturbed in adversity; he is happy and contended in prosperity, and he is a stranger to anxiety, fear and anger. Such a wise man is called a Moonee. The wisdom of that man is established, who in all things is without affection; and having received good or evil, neither rejoiceth at the one, nor is cast down by the other.

Lord Krishna is explaining to Arjuna how he, i.e. Arjuna could perform his duties in the most satisfactory way. Disinterestedness is the answer; the Sanskrit term for this is *sthitaprajnatā* which implies transcendence of all dualities—joy and grief, success and failure, profit and loss, etc. In the spirit of Krishna's favourite doctrine, the Oceanus of *Hyperion* asks Saturn to remain perfectly placid and calm in the face of his abject defeat. In the considered view of the *Gītā*, all joys and sorrows are due to the vagaries of Nature, her 3 strands or modes called *guṇas*. Hence, a sage remains unmoved by them saying: '*guṇā guṇeṣu vartante*' (the phenomena of pleasure and pain, joy and grief, etc., are due to the three modes of Nature) but the fools think they themselves are the cause of those phenomena (vide *Gita* 3. 27-28). The Oceanus of Keats's poem, quite like the sage of *Gītā*, attributes all changes in life to Nature. Mark his words carefully:

> We fall by course of Nature's law, not force
> Of thunder, or of Jove.
>
> (*Hyperion* lines 181-82).

No doubt, the philosophy of life that Oceanus is advocating here is that of the true sage whom Lord Krishna defines in the *Gītā* XIII.29 in the following words:

> प्रकृत्यैव च कर्माणि क्रियमाणानि सर्वशः।
> यः पश्यति तथात्मानमकर्तारं स पश्यति।।
>
> *prakṛtyaiva ca karmāṇi kriyamāṇani sarvasaḥ*
> *yah paśyati tathātmānam akartāraṁ sa paśyati.*

Wilkins had rendered this verse in the following manner:[27]

> He who beholdeth all his actions performed by Prakreet-tee, nature, at the same time perceiveth that the Atma or soul is inactive in them.

Since Oceanus conforms to what the *Gītā* in the above verse describes as the outlook of a true sage, he should be called an Indian sage fully realized. Keats's characterization of Oceanus as 'Sophist and sage from no Athenian grove' (line 168) is very remarkable. I take Keats's words to mean that Oceanus is a sage from the land of the Ganges which has been mentioned at line 108 of the same book, introducing Oceanus in the *Hyperion*. Moreover, there are many statements of Oceanus which seem to have been borrowed from the statements of the Indian sage Iarchus whom the Greek philosopher Apollonius of Tyana had accepted and acknowledged as his guru as has been recorded in Philostratus's well-known book entitled *de vita Apollonii* (*The Life of Apollonius*), written in AD 210 but translated and published in England in the language of the natives of that country in 1809. According to Miriam Allott,[28] Keats is very likely to have read this book. In any event, he knew a lot about Apollonius of Tyana. This is clear from the fact that he has introduced the Greek philosopher as an important character in his *Lamia*. I suspect that the following statement of Oceanus, addressed to Saturn:

> And, first, as thou wast not the first of powers,
> So art thou not the last; it cannot be.
> Thou art not the beginning nor the end.
>
> (*Hyperion*, lines 188-90)

is modelled on and inspired by the words of Iarchus, addressed to Apollonius in the book of Philostratus:[29]

> Those Achaean sailors were the ruin of Troy, and your talking so much about it is the ruin of you Greeks. For you imagine that the campaigners against Troy were the only heroes that ever were, and you forget other

heroes both more numerous and more divine, whom your country and that of the Egyptians and that of the Indians have produced....

I believe that Keats was highly impressed by the Indian sage Iarchus as projected in Philostratus's eminent book and that he had modelled his Oceanus on that sage who represents *Gītā*'s philosophy of *Sthitaprajnatā* at its best. Another fact that leads me to believe that Oceanus is an Indian sage is that like Indian sages or *yogis*, he has the knack of going into trances which last for ages; in this respect he recalls Shiva, the greatest *yogin* in the history of India. This aspect of Oceanus has been revealed in *Endymion* III, 993-97.

(6) Allied to the doctrine of *Sthitaprajnatā* is the doctrine of *Nishkāmakarma* or Action with the least regard for its fruits; the *Gītā* spells it out in Verses 47 and 48 of its second chapter. The verses are well-known and read as follows:

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन।
मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भर्मा ते सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि।।
योगस्थः कुरु कर्माणि सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा धनंजय।
सिद्धयसिद्धयोः समो भूत्वा समत्वं योग उच्यते।।

karmaṇyevādhikāraste mā phaleṣu kadācana
mā karmaphalahetur bhur mā te sangostvakarmaṇi
yogasthaḥ kuru karmāṇi sangaṁ tyaktvā dhananjaya
siddhyasiddhyoḥ samo bhūtvā samatvaṁ yoga ucyate

Wilkins had rendered these verses in the following words:[30]

Let thy motive be in the deed, and not in the event. Be not one whose motive for action is for reward. Let not thy life be spent in inaction. Depend upon application, perform thy duty, abandon all thought of the consequence, and make the event equal, whether it terminate in good or evil; for an equality is called yoga.

Lord Krishna's brilliant words, it seems to me, had made a very deep impact upon Keats's mind. Under the garb of 'Disinterested Action', he has propounded the philosophy of *Nishkāmakarma* in a very powerful way in his famous letter

to George and Georgiana Keats, dated Sunday 14 February-Monday 3 May 1819. In the portion of the letter that the poet wrote on Friday (nineteenth entry) we have the exposition of *Gītā*'s grand doctrine:[31]

> Very few men have ever arrived at a complete disinterestedness of Mind: very few have been influenced by a pure desire of the benefit of others—in the greater part of the Benefactors of and to Humanity some meretricious motive has sullied their greatness—some melodramatic scenery has fascinated them. From the manner in which I feel Haslam's misfortunes I perceive how far I am from any humble standard of disinterestedness....

He further says this principle was fully exemplified by Socrates and Jesus. In his own life he was striving to achieve this very goal although in the quotation from his letter, cited above, he modestly says that he is far behind. It would be very interesting to note that the Victorian literary critic Matthew Arnold, who was all for disinterestedness not only in the field of literary creation but rather in all walks of life, had admired both Keats and the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, mainly on account of disinterestedness that the one practised and the other preached.[32] It should also be asserted here that the doctrine of *Nishkāmakarma* enunciated in the *Gītā* had first impressed the German philosopher Immanuel Kant who had formulated his famous ethical theory of categorical imperative in imitation of *Gītā*'s—*Nishkāmakarma*: from Kant the doctrine was adopted by William Wordsworth for his 'Ode to Duty'. It is possible that Keats had learnt of the doctrine first from the *Bhagavad-Gītā* and then felt inspired by Wordsworth's great ode.

(7) The *Gītā* seems to be at the back of Keats's words, put in the mouth of Apollo in *Hyperion: A Fragment*, Book III, lines 113-20. Here, Apollo asserts that knowledge is the source of his Godhead: 'Knowledge enormous makes a god of me.' Clearly, Godhead is achieved, in Keats's view, through enormous knowledge. This is a typically Indian viewpoint. In

the *Ṛgveda* itself men of knowledge have been acclaimed as gods: 'विद्वांसो हि देवा' (*vidvānso hi devāḥ*). It is said that Pythagoras, after he achieved wisdom from the Indian sages of the sixth century BC, was declared to be a god and when he returned to his native country, he retained that appellation. Keats must have got the idea from his reading of *de Vita Apollonii* by Philostratus. In this 'Life' the Indian sage Iarchus tells Apollonius of Tyana at one place that he is a god because he knows everything.[33] Keats must have been struck by this self-glorification of the otherwise meek and humble sage when he demonstrated his omniscience by telling Apollonius each detail of the Greek's journey to India—the persons he had met and the kind of conversation he had held with them and so on. It seems to me that when Keats found the same assertion about knowledge made in the holy book of the Hindus, i.e. the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, re-affirmed through the mouth of Lord Krishna himself—Krishna whom Thomas Maurice had identified with Apollo, the sun-god of the Greeks, the poet in Keats must have thought it fit to put the words: 'Knowledge enormous makes a god of me' in the mouth of the sun-god in his projected epic. In the eighteenth verse of the *Gītā* Chapter 13, the Lord declares:

> इति क्षेत्रं तथा ज्ञानं ज्ञेयं चोक्तं समासतः।
> मद्भक्त एतद्विज्ञाय मद्भावायोपपद्यते।।
>
> *iti kśetraṃ tathā jnanaṃ jneyaṃ co'ktaṃ samāsataḥ*
> *madbhakta etad vijnāya madbhāvāyopapadyate*

In Wilkins's book the verse runs thus:[34]

> Thus hath been described together what is kśetra or body, what is Gnan or wisdom, and what is Gneya or the object of wisdom. *He my servant who thus conceiveth me obtaineth my nature* (italics added).

In the italicized portion of Wilkins's rendering of Lord Krishna's words in the *Gītā*, Keats must have found the confirmation of Iarchus's claim that he was a god because he knew everything (i.e. *kśetra, kśetrajna, jnana* and *jneya*). It

is very interesting that Keats's Apollo enumerates the causal factors of his godhead in the spirit of the *Gītā*:

> Names, deeds, grey legends, dire events, rebellions,
> Majesties, sovran voices, agonies,
> Creations and destroyings, all at once
> Pour into the wide hollows of my brain,
> And deify me, as if some blithe wine
> Or bright elixir peerless I had drunk,
> And so become immortal.
>
> (*Hyperion* III, lines 114-20)

This passage can be interpreted in terms of what *Gītā* calls *kśetra* or *prakrti* and *kśetrajna* or *puruṣa*. 'Majesties and sovran voices' can be regarded as the items falling under the head of *kśetrajna* or *purusha* and the rest of the items fall under what *Gītā* calls *kśetra* or *prakṛti*. Since Apollo has understood both *kśetra* and *kśetrajna* completely, he should be deemed as having attained his true identity—the Godhead within—resulting in his elevation to the status of a god.

(8) The greatest contribution to the world of thought that Keats had made was, I think, his theory of 'Negative Capability', the fullest exposition of which is available in his letter to his 2 brothers, dated 28 December 1817. Much has been written on this apparently ill-chosen term, the most comprehensive study on the subject being W.J. Bate's *Negative Capability: The Intuitive Approach to Keats* (Cambridge, Mass., 1939) and yet the subject has continued to be debatable. Keats himself explains the term as man's capability of 'being in uncertainities, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason'. The expression 'without any irritable reaching after fact or reason', is, I think, the most significant clue in understanding Keats's true meaning. Perhaps, Keats is attacking religious dogmatism of the kind we find in the poetry of Wordsworth whereas in really great poets like Shakespeare there is complete avoidance of any dogmatism whatsoever with the result that the great dramatist's relgious views could not be possibly ascertained.

Liberal, broad-minded, objective and impartial plus passive acceptance of all views on any given topic is what Kneats seems to be implying by the term 'Negative Capability'. This is typically a Hindu outlook which the *Bhagavad-Gītā* clearly vindicates by giving approval to all possible ways of realizing God: *sāmkhya*, *yoga*, and *bhakti*, recognizing the beauty of all paths. It would be a matter of great interest here to recall that Benjamin Robert Haydon, a friend of Keats, had equated 'Paganism' with 'Negative Capability' in his account of Wordsworth's prejudiced and short-sighted dismissal of Keats's 'Hymn to Pan' with the remark that the poem was 'a very pretty piece of Paganism'.[35] Haydon commented on this reaction of Wordsworth to Keats's poem: 'The Poet ought to have been a Pagan for the time'. Being a Pagan clearly implies here being a person of Catholic outlook, broad-minded and tolerant, responding to Beauty wherever it could be found, without any hesitation and restriction. This is, I think, what Keats wanted to convey through his term 'Negative Capability'. Since Hindus, like Greeks and Romans, accept and worship many gods and goddesses, they can be pagans and in fact many Englishmen had designated Hindus as pagans. If Haydon had Hindus in mind while he made the above observation on Wordsworth's dismissal of 'Hymn to Pan', he was in all probability conscious of the supreme tolerance of the Hindus, their favourable responses to the beauties of all religions and creeds. I suspect that Keats had come to propound his concept of 'Negative Capability' after his deep study of Hinduism and specially the greatest religious text of the Hindus, namely, the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, which advocates tolerance of all kinds and pleads for the negation of egoistical temper for the realization of the Ultimate Reality.

(9) The theory of Metempsychosis or re-birth for which the *Gītā* and for that matter the whole of Hindu philosophy are famous, also seems to have found favour with Keats who had been almost an enemy of Christianity. The italicized portion of the following statement of his bears testimony to the fact that in the year 1820, at least, he had come to believe in

another life, another birth, presumably under the influence of Hinduism:

> The thought of leaving Miss Brawne is beyond every thing horrible—the sense of darkness coming over me—I eternally see her figure eternally vanishing. Some of the phrases she was in the habit of using during my last nursing at Wentworth Place ring in my ears—Is there another Life? Shall I awake and find all this a dream? *There must be; we cannot be created for this sort of suffering* (italics added).

Thus, the thesis that I have tried to establish is that India is a very significant aspect of Keats's poetry and other writings, in fact, of his very being. Had that been not the case, he would never have made the Indian Maid a very significant figure in the *Endymion* (Book IV); the fact that he elevates the lady to the status of a goddess and even identifies her with Cynthia, the moon-goddess, speaks volumes for his ardent love of India, her cultural traditions and her philosophy. The numerous details, scattered throughout his writings, pertaining to the rivers of the country, its chief mountain Himalayas, its mythology and some of its philosophical concepts, compel us to conclude that he could not have missed the metaphysical treasure of India, contained in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* which was available to him in his native language and was enthusiastically discussed in the literary circle of the day, particularly by Blake, Coleridge and Southey and the magazines like *The British Critic* and the *Monthly Magazine*.[36] It is, thus, not at all improbable that the poet was fully acquainted with the Hindu scripture and used many of its doctrines in his poetry and philosophical speculation available in his copious letters. I have located the sources of several thoughts of his poems and letters in the Hindu text and I believe there is still enough scope for further research in the field.

Notes and References

1. Maurice Buxton Forman, one volume edition of *The Letters*

of John Keats, fourth edition with revisions and additional letters, Oxford University Press, London, 1952, pp. 343-44. All quotations from the letters of Keats for the purpose of the present paper are from this book.

2. Ibid., p. 44.
3. Ibid., p. 343.
4. Ibid., p. 488.
5. Ibid., p. 345.
6. Ibid., p. 347.
7. Ibid., p. 451.
8. Ibid., p. 101.
9. Ibid., p. 102.
10. Harold Bloom and Lionel Trilling (ed.) *Romantic Poetry and Prose*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1973, p. 771. The relevant comment is just this: 'In Buddhist doctrine' (footnote 39).
11. Maurice Buxton Forman, op. cit., p. 336.
12. The Orientalists of the closing years of the eighteenth century led by Sir William Jones, had put forward very emphatically this very view. See Jones's Presidential lecture, addressed to the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, entitled 'On the Gods of Greece, Italy, and India' available in *Asiatic Researches*, volume one, pp. 221-75. It must also be borne in mind here that when Alexander invaded India in 326 BC he and his soldiers had identified Dionysus or Bacchus with the Hindu god Shiva. See *Ancient India as Described by Megasthenes and Arrian*, translated J.W. McCrindle, London, 1877.
13. Vide Jones's Presidential Address to the Asiatic Society of Bengal, entitled 'On the Gods of Greece, Italy and India'.
14. Phyllis Mann, 'Keats's Indian Allegory', *Keats-Shelley Journal* VI (1957), pp. 4-5.
15. The work of W. Kirkpatrick is really the measure of the extent of Keats's keen and profound interest in works, dealing with Indian affairs, available to him.
16. Maurice Buxton Forman, op. cit., pp. 334-35.
17. Charles Wilkins, *Bhagwad-Geeta Or the Dialogue Between Kreeshna And Arjoon*, The Strand, London, 1785, p. 119. All English renderings of the verses from the Hindu text are from this book which will be hence onward called just 'Wilkins'. It must be noted that Charles Wilkins did not supply the

Sanskrit text in his translation; he provided only the English prose renderings of the verses of the Hindu scripture. Here, the original Sanskrit texts of the verses quoted are from the standard version, published by the Geeta Press, Gorakhpur. In each case the Sanskrit texts have been transliterated for those who cannot read the Devanāgarī script.

18. Robert M. Ryan, *Keats: The Religious Sense*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1976, p. 201.
19. Wilkins, op. cit., p. 112.
20. Maurice Buxton Forman, op. cit., p. 335.
21. Wilkins, p. 113.
22. Maurice Buxton Forman, op. cit., p. 345.
23. Wilkins, p. 52.
24. Maurice Buxton Forman, op. cit., pp. 143-44 (Letter No. 64).
25. Robert M. Ryan, op. cit., p. 172.
26. Wilkins, p. 56.
27. Ibid., p. 103.
28. Miriam Allott (ed.), *The Poems of John Keats*, Longmans, London, 1970, 2nd impression, 1972. See the notes on *Lamia*.
29. *Philostratus's Life of Apollonius Of Tyna*, translated by F.C. Conybeare in 2 vols., Vol. I, The Macmillan Co., London, 1912, p. 269. Keats must have read *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana* in the translation of the Irish Clergyman—E. Berwick which had appeared in 1811.
30. Wilkins, p. 40.
31. Maurice Buxton Forman, op. cit., pp. 313-14.
32. For Arnold's views on disinterestedness exemplified by Keats, read his essay entitled 'Keats' in *Essays in Criticism* (Second Series, 1888) and for his interest in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* see his early readings in *The Note-Books of Matthew Arnold*, edited by H.F. Lowry, K. Young and W.H. Dunn, London, 1952, pp. 551 ff. Kenneth Allott believed that Arnold's interest in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* was awakened in 1945 by Victor Cousin's *Introduction à l'Historie de la Philosophie*. See his paper 'Matthew Arnold's Reading-Lists in Three Early Diaries', *Victorian Studies*, II (1958-59), pp. 254-66.
33. *Philostratus's Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, op. cit., p. 269. The Indian sage Iarchus tells Apollonius: 'We consider ourselves to be Gods.' And when the latter asks 'Why?', the sage replies: 'Because we are good men.' Iarchus has ear-

lier (p. 267) maintained that he and other Indian sages know everything because they know themselves.

34. Wilkins, p. 104.
35. Vide Robert M. Ryan, op. cit. p. 146. Haydon's remarks are also to be found on the same page.
36. Charles Wilkins's translation of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* was received most enthusiastically by the scholarly circles of England soon after its publication in London in 1785 as is borne out by the favourable reviews of it appearing in the famous periodical papers of the times. See the *Monthly Review* (1750-51, 1770-1800), LXXVI, March, 208-10, 1787, and the *British Critic* (1793-1800), III, February 1794, p. 154.

Conclusion

The argument presented in the book establishes beyond doubt that India has always been a source of inspiration to the imaginative mind of the West since the times of Homer. But by the end of the eighteenth century she had become the heart of the Western imagination in the wake of the Indian Renaissance that took place in England in the form of an enormous number of English translations of Indian texts by the great orientalists of England. These were done directly from the original versions of the texts concerned, the most significant of which was no doubt the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. The *Gītā* in its English prose version of Charles Wilkins changed the whole attitude of the English people towards India and her culture. It was read and enjoyed by all the serious-minded readers of England, particularly the emerging poets of the country such as Blake, Wordsworth, Southey, Scott, and Coleridge. Indian mysticism enshrined in the *Gītā* fascinated these great masters and later their successors like Keats and Shelley. The result is that the inspiration behind many passages in the great poems of these romantics can be traced to the Indian text as has been clearly demonstrated in the individual chapters devoted to these poets. On the basis of this fact it could be safely maintained that the *Gītā* was a very significant factor responsible for the generation of the romantic spirit in England. This has, however, sadly gone unacknowledged and unnoticed but richly deserves to be highlighted by impartial and sensitive students of English romantic poetry. Those who have some doubts in regard to this thesis of the present work are urged to ponder over the following

questions:

1. How do we explain the overwhelming references to India and things Indian in the poetic works of the poets mentioned above?
2. Why did every English romantic poet plan to visit India at some point of time in his/her life as their diaries and letters conclusively prove?
3. How do we account for the numerous ambigous passages in great poems like the 'Immortality Ode' and how is it that these passages can be comprehensively explained in terms of the philosophy of the *Gītā* or the *Upanishads*? Does not the analysis of that great Ode, put forward in the chapter on Wordsworth in the present book, amply prove this?
4. Why did Wordsworth and Coleridge suppress many passages or lines, or sometimes the titles, originally published? Was not this due to the anti-Hindu feelings generated in England at the time of the subsequent publications of those poems, brought about by the narrow-minded missionaries of the times? Were those passages or lines or titles poetically viable at the time of the first publication of the poems and later discovered to be artistically weak or inept for subsequent publications?
5. Is it not remarkable that both Wordsworth and Coleridge had links with India through their brothers—John and Frank respectively, both of whom were in the employment of the British East India Company? Could this not have given extra-impetus to the fascination of these two stalwarts of English romanticism with India and Indian philosophy embodied in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*?
6. Was Abbey Du Bois wrong when in his *Hindu Manners* he observed that the romantic style of poetry had been imbibed by Europe from the Indian style of poetry writing?
7. Was a literary critic of the eminence of G. Wilson Knight beside the mark when he said that India was electrical to Shelley's imagination? Is this observation in his excellent

study of the English romantic poetry called the *Starlit Dome* not worth serious consideration?

8. How is it that notwithstanding the fact that on the eve of the birth of the Romantic Movement in England India was held in Europe to be the place of the origin of human civilization—a belief which was shared by almost all the English romantics—scholars of the subject surprisingly shy away from mentioning India in their studies of the background of that great Movement or of the poets and poems concerned? Is this indifference to India and the *Gītā* not deliberate and studied and due entirely to racial prejudice? Does it not call for a fresh appraisal?

I believe that if the readers of the present book give serious thought to the questions posed above, all their scepticism will be dispelled at once and they will feel compelled to realize the significance of the present study. I further believe that future scholars, delving deeper in the matter than I have, will come forward with more details which have remained unearthed so far and will throw new lights on the subject.

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Key to the Pronunciation of Sanskrit Words

क् = k
क = ka
ख् = kh
ख = kha
ग् = g
ग = ga
घ् = gh
घ = gha
ङ् = ñg
ङ = ñga
च् = c
च = ca
छ् = cch
छ = ccha
ज् = j
ज = ja
झ् = jh
झ = jha
ञ् = ñj
ञ = ñja
ट् = ṭ
ट = ṭa
ठ् = ṭh
ठ = ṭha
ड् = ḍ
ड = ḍa
ढ् = ḍh
ढ = ḍha
ण् = ṇ
ण = ṇa

त् = t
त = ta
थ् = th
थ = tha
द् = d
द = da
ध् = dh
ध = dha
न् = n
न = na
प् = p
प = pa
फ् = f
फ = fa
ब् = b
ब = ba
भ् = bh
भ = bha
म् = m
म = ma
य् = y
य = ya
र् = r
र = ra
ल् = l
ल = la
व् = v
व = va
श् = 'ś
श = 'śa

ष् = ṣ
ष = ṣa
स् = s
स = sa
ह् = h
ह = ha
क्ष् = ṣ
क्ष = ṣa
त्र् = tr
त्र = tra
ज्ञ् = jn
ज्ञ = jna
श्र् = śr
श्र = śra
अ = a
आ = ā
इ = i
ई = ī
उ = u
ऊ = ū
ए = a
ऐ = ai
ओ = o
औ = au
अं = ang
अः = aḥ
ऋ = ṛ
ऌ = ḷṛ

Index

A—the first of letters as the symbol of God, 21
Abantes, 50
Abbasid Caliph, 96
Abdallah-Bin-Mokaffah, 94
Abhijnānaśākuntalam, 132, 205, 248, 259, 296, 298, 301
Ābhīra, 49
'Absalom and Achitophel', 120
Abyssinia, 312
Achaean, 326
Achaemenid empire and dynasty, 54
Achaemenids, 54, 93
Acquinas, Thomas, 102
Action (without attachment), 15
Addison, Joseph, 125, 126
Adharma, 267
Adhibhūta, 18, 19
Adhidaiva, 18
Adhiyajna, 18, 19
'Ādiparva', 106
Ādityas, 20, 21
Ādi Shankarācharya, 1, 36, 148, 209, 289, 296
Adhyātma, 18, 19
Adonais, 292–94
Advaita and Neoplatonism, 111
Advaita Vedanta, 148, 296
Advaitins, 209, 245, 254, 296
Adwaitmist, 209, 252, 254, 296
Ādya Puruṣa, 27
Agusthus, 51, 52
Aesop's Tales, 99
Aeschylus, 51, 52, 93
Africans, 172
Agamemnon, 60
Against Celsus, 86
Against the Christians, 86
Agni, 20
Agocles, 81
Agrahan or Agrahāyaṇa, 20
Aham Brahmāsmi, 47, 48, 212, 226
Ahaṁkāra, 14, 17, 23, 185
Ahargaṇa, 97
Ahmedabad, 138
Aids to Reflection, 209, 211, 212
Airāvata, 20, 142
Ajātaśatru, 54
Ajnānavāda, 76
Akaba, Gulf of, 49
Ākāśa, 71
Akber, 118, 119
Akṣara, 19, 27, 33, 35, 240
Akṣara-brahmayoga, 18
Al-Arabi, 102
Alastor, 279, 286, 297, 298
Albion, 138, 144, 149
Al-Batagni, 104

al-Biruni (Abu Rihan Muhammad), 101
Alcuin, 113, 132, 133
Alchemy, 104
Alexander, the Great, 39, 51, 59, 69, 74, 75, 77, 78, 79, 80, 85, 115, 116, 117, 282, 303
Alexander of Epirus, 81
Alexandria, 44, 51, 60, 82, 85, 87, 102, 104
Alexandrine erotic fragments, 82
Alexandrian scholars, 44, 47, 49, 58, 60
Alfred, King of the West Saxons, 113
Algorithmi de numero Indrum, 101
Alhadra, 215
al-Ghabali, 102
al-Hindi (or Ta'rikh al-Hind), 100
Alif-Laila wa-laila, 98
al-Khwarazmi, Muhammad ibn Muse, 101
al-Kindi, 100
Allah, 215
Allamanda, 138
Allot, Miriam, 314, 326, 334
Amaseia, 78
America, 137
America: A Prophecy, 145
Ambike, S., 247
Amreet (i.e. Amṛta), 271
Anabasis, 79
Ānanda, 214
Ananta or Śeṣa, 20, 214
Anaxagoras, 73
Anaxarchus, 75
Ancient India as Described by Ketesias, the Knidian, 108
"Ancient and Modern Learning", 123
Andes, 279
Andhra Pradesh, 136
Angelo, Michael, 146, 147
Annual Rigister, 163, 193, 213, 305
Ansha-Anshī relationship, 140
"Anuśasanaparva", 106
Anti-Christ, 145
Antigone, 52
Antigone, 52
Antigonus Gonatus of Macedonia, 81
Antiochus, 81
Antiquity of the *Gītā*, 8–10
Anushirvan, Chosroe, 94, 95, 106
Aparā Prakṛti, 17, 24, 178, 179
Aparānta, 81
Apocalypse, 144
Apohana, 312
Apollo, 74, 307, 329
Apollonius of Tyana, 43, 82–85, 107, 221, 326, 329
Apollonius Rhodius, 86, 208, 326
Apostolic Christianity, 103
Apuleius, 45, 46, 47, 60
Arabia, 39, 93, 94
Arabie, 279
Arabian Nights, 98, 99, 100, 133
Arabian Sea, 41
Arabic, Old, 2, 162, 205
Arab physicians, 114
Arab power, 105

Arch-enemy of mankind (i.e. Kāma), 14
Arcot, 128
Ardshir, 96
Argos, 51
Argonautica, 86
Ariel, 291
Arjuna, 7, 10 onward
Arjuna-viṣādayoga, 11
Aristobulos, 74, 75
Aristotle, 41, 48, 67, 69–73, 110
Aristotelian logic and metaphysics, 69, 72
Aristoxenus, 59
Arkand, 97
Arnold, Sir Edwin, vii, 1, 36, 37, 161, 192
Arnold, Matthew, 122, 328, 334
Arsacid dynasty of Persia, 91
Arrian (Flavius, Arrianus), 75, 78–79, 80
Artaxeraxes (Mnemon), 56, 58
Art as divine fellowship, 147
Artha, 145
Arthaśastra, 95
Arvalan, 260–61
Āryans, 55, 93, 115
Āryana migrations, 48
Asat, 23
Ascetic, 17
Asceticism, 5
Ashoka, 80, 81
Asia, 68, 281
Asia Minor, 40, 42, 78
Asian Coast, 39, 40
Asiatic Researches, 221, 251, 302, 333
Asiatic sources, 68
Assyria, 91
Aṣtadhā, 17
Aṣtādhyāyī, 106
Assuan, 89
Asuras, 21
Aśvattha, 26, 185
Aśvinīkumāra or Ashvinīkumāra, 311
Atharvaveda, 9, 10
Atheism, 211
Athens, visit of Indians to, in the life-time of Socrates, 53, 58, 59, 67, 68, 88
Atkinson, 275
Ātmā or Ātman, 14, 24, 25, 141, 180, 317
Ātmasaṁnyāsayoga, 16
Ātmatattva, 292
Atomic theory of Democritus, 71
Attachment, 15, 27
Augustan age, 88, 123, 127
Augustus, 88
Augustine, St., 103
Aum, 17
Aurangzeb, 126, 184, 213
Aurangzeb, 122
"Autumn", 273
Avantī, 50
Avatāra, 200, 312
Avatāravāda, 311, 322
Avayavas, 70
Averroes, 100, 101, 102, 114
Averroists, 101
Avesta, 93
Avicebron, 104
Avicenna, 100, 101, 102, 114
Avidyā, 179
Avyakta, 19, 152
Ayeene-Acbery, 259

Babylon, 45
Bacchae, The, 39, 53, 106
Bacchants, 39
Bacchus, 39, 53, 282, 307, 312
Bactria, 39, 75, 91
Bādarāyaṇa, 1, 7, 84
Baghadad, 96, 97
Bāla (used by Southey), 254
Balk or Balkha, 313
Barbara logic, 71–72
Basham, A.L., 46, 107
Basilides, 102
Bate, W.J., 330
Batna or the esotenic message of the *Holy Koran*, 101
Baudhāyana-Gṛhyasūtra, 107
Baudhāyana-Śulba, 107
Bayle, Pierre, 314
Beans, avoidance of by Pythagoras, 42, 203
Beas, 90
Beatty, Arthur, 158, 191
Bedford, 253
Bede, Venerable, 113
Beer, J.B., 220, 251
Beggars Opera, 127
Benares, 117, 138
Bengalee, The, 288
Bengālī, 129
Bentick, Lord William, 250
Berager, P., 136, 147, 156, 157
Bernier, Francis, 122, 127
Berzuet, 94
Bhagavad-Gītānuvāda, 6
Bhagavatapurāṇa, 57, 120, 127, 207, 259, 268
Bhakta, 17
Bhakti, 331
Bhaktiyoga, 22, 32, 36
Bhandarkar, Dr. D.R., 81
Bhāravi, vii
Bhartṛhari, 120, 134
Bhaskarācharya, 98
Bhāva, 18
Bhavabhūti, vii
Bhīma, 7
Bhīṣma, 7
"Bhiṣmaparva", 6, 10
Bhojapatra, 315
Bhṛgu, 21, 142
Bhūtas, 29
Bhūtagrāma, 152
Bible, The Holy and the *Hindu Bible*, vii, 6, 160, 161
Bibliotheque Orientale, 127
Bidpai, 94
Bidpai, the Tales of, 94
"Bigotry's Victim", 279
Bihar, 46
Biographia Literaria, 208, 249
Bimbisāra, 54
Binding effects of actions, 13
Bindusāra, 80, 81
Bithynia, 78
Blackhole tragedy of Bengala, 128, 309
Blake, H.G.C., 4
Blake, William, vii, ix, 135, 136–157, 159, 264, 332, 336
Blessedness, state of, 18, 19
Bloom, Harold, 182, 196, 246, 310, 333
Boccaccio, Giovanni, 100
Bodhisattva, 99
Body, 23, 33
Boehme, Jacob, ix, 136
Boeotia, 79
Bombay, 4, 121
Bourgogne, Jehane de, 115
Bowlahovla, 138

Bowra, C.M., 158, 191
Brachmanes (i.e. Brahmins), 60, 86, 87
Bradshaw, W., 124
"Brahma", 262
Brahma or Brahman, 4, 18, 19, 22, 23, 26, 27, 29, 31, 33, 36, 59, 61, 65, 66, 111, 179, 181, 213, 241, 292, 296, 317
Brahmā, 4, 18, 140, 162, 263, 270, 271, 311, 312, 316
Brahmaṇas, 10, 31, 34, 43, 210, 312
Brahmacharya, 180, 181
Brahmagupta, 97
Brahmanic mysticism, 86
Brahmanic system, 123, 124
Brahmaniṣṭhatā, 13
Brahmānanda, 241
Brahmaninvāṇa, 244
Brahmānubhūti, 244
Brahma-Sphutsiddhānta, 97
Brahmasūtra, 1, 7, 84
Brahmavidyāyoga, 167
Brahmin, 4, 44, 45, 46, 47, 59, 60, 61, 63, 83, 85, 120, 123, 130, 131, 206, 248
Brahmin Creed (mentioned by Coleridge), 208, 212
"Brahmins, The", 159
Brahmin theosophy and mythology, 200, 211
Brama (i.e. Brahmā), 139
Bramon (i.e. Brahmā), 121
Bṛhadāranyakopanishad, 46, 62, 295, 296
Bṛhadratha, 65
Bṛhaspati, 20
Bristol Library, 213, 221, 246
British, 8
British Museum Library, 209
British Critic, The, 132, 135, 159, 192, 304, 332, 335
Broad divisions of humanity, 28
Brooks, Cleanth, 158, 192
Bruno, G., ix, 104
Buchanan, Claudius, 259
Buddha, Lord, 43, 44, 46, 74, 86, 99
Buddhacarita, 310
Buddhi, 34, 185
Buddhism and Buddhist, 76, 81, 86, 99, 103, 203, 208, 209, 211, 310
Buddhist Chemistry, 104
Buddhist era, 40
Buddhiyoga, 20
Burma, 203
Butler, Charles, 255
Byzantine, 79

Caesar, Julius, 88
Caesaria, 59
Cairo, 96
Çakuntala, 132
Calanos (i.e. Kalonos), 204
Calasay (i.e. Kailasa), 268
Calcutta, 4
Caliphs, 96, 97
Callewaert, Winand M., 6
Callisthanes, 75
Camdeo (i.e. Kāmadeva), 278, 300
Cambridge Platonists, 165
Cambridge scholar, 194
Cameron, K.N., 284, 300, 303
Canterbury Tales, 114
"Cap and the Bells", 313, 314

Cappadocia, 78, 83
Cardiz, 88
Carian City, 60
Carmanian Waste, 279
Carmen Saeculare, 91
Carminum, 90
Carminum Liber, 90
Caryanda, 40, 41
Cashmire, 279, 283
Caspapyros, 42, 51
Caspatyros, 41, 42
Caspian Sea, 91
Cassius, Dio, 86, 88
Casyapa (i.e. Kashyapa), 263
"Catalogue of Rydal Mount Library", 194
Cathari, 103, 112
Catonian, 89
Caturanga, 98
Celibacy, 48
Celt, 281
Ceremonies, 266
Ceremonies et costumes religiouse, 127
Cetanā, 23
Ceylone, 315
Chaeronea, 79
Chaldeans, 45, 46
Champaka, 255, 285, 286
Chaṇakya, 95
Chandragupta Maurya, 77
Chāndogya-Upanishad, 180, 181, 245
Charaka, 97
Charaka-Saṁhitā, 97
Charlemagne, 97, 113
Charles II, 120
Charleston, 4
Chase, The, 127
Chaturanga, 98
Chaucer, Geoffrey, 99, 100, 114, 115
Checkmate, 98
Chess, 98
Chidbhavānand, Swami, 5, 37
Child-life, glorification of, 180
Children, 188
Chinese sages, 47
Christ, 43, 44, 50, 118, 153
Christendom, 6
Christian faith, 174, 225, 257
Christian heresies, 103
Christianity, its introduction in India, 44
Chrysostom, Dio, 86, 112
Cicero, 79
Ciphor, 97
Clement, 44, 46, 47, 86, 104
Cleitarchus, 86
Cleopatra, 85
"Cloud, The", 298
Coburn, Kathaleen, 192, 203, 207, 208, 209, 246, 249
Cochin, 103
Code of Gentoo Laws, A, 129, 130
Colebrooke, H.T., 130, 179, 195, 310
Coleridge, Frank, 245, 337
Coleridge, Sara (Fricker), 225, 226
Coleridge, S.T., vii, 135, 136, 159, 160, 173, 188, 198–252, 332, 336, 337
Coleridge As Philosopher, 198, 246
Coleridge, the Visionary, 220, 251
Collected Letters of S.T. Coleridge, 250

Concordance to the Poetic Works of Wordsworth, 161, 192
Confessio Amantis, 114
Consciousness, 16, 34, 245
Conti, Nicolo de, 105
Conybeare, F.O., 107, 110
Cordova, 96
Cosmic form of Lord Krishna, 21, 22
Cosmic tree, 27
Cowen, Marrianne, 249
Cousins, Victor, 5, 37
Creon, 52
Crete, 74
Ctsesiphon, the capital of Persia, 96
Cudworth, Ralph, 194
Curse of Kehama, ix, 159, 173, 253–276
Curtius, Quintus, 78, 80, 303
Cybele, 144
Cycle of births and deaths, 13, 14, 27, 28, 182, 273
Cynthia, 315, 332
Cyprus, 75
Cyrene, 59
Cyrus II, 54
Czar of Muscovy, 126
Czech, 5

Dāhasaṁskāra, 185
Dahira, Hindu ruler of Sindha, 96
Dakṣaprajāpati, 312
Daimachus, 80
Daivāsursampad-vibhāgayoga, 27
"Daemon of the World", 279
Daivīprakṛti, 177
Damis, the Syrian, 83
Damon, S. Foster, 139, 156
Dandamis, 80, 204
Daniel, Samuel, 184
Danaus, 51
Dante, Alighieri, 100
Dara Shikoh, 122, 128, 213
Darius I, 40, 41, 53, 93
Darii, 71
Darkling seers, 171
Darul Shekha, 259
Das Buch der byspel (Beispide) der Allen Wysen, 205
Davies, John, 7, 8, 37
Death, Brahmin contemptuous attitude to, 80
Decameron, 100, 115
De Anima, 73
D'herbelot, 46, 127
Decimal system, India's contribution to world-civilization, 98
"Dejection: An Ode", 240, 243
Delusion, caused by the three guṇas, 17
Demonic endowments, 27
Democritus, 60, 71
Demogorgon, 281, 300
De Natura Rerum, 113
De Platone et Eius Dogmate, 60
De Quincey, 204
Descriptive Catalogue, 136, 137, 156, 159, 304
Desire for fruits of actions, 15
Deutsch Monatsschrift, 164
Devala, 9
Devanāgarī script, 172, 217
Devayāna, 148
De Viris Illustribus, 44

Dharma, 35, 145, 267
Dhṛtarāṣṭra, 7, 11, 12, 32, 145
Dhṛti, 23
Dhyāna, 24
Dhyānayoga, 35
Dialectical penetration, 5
Dialogue as a form of literary expression, invented by the Vedic seers, 12
Dictation text (of Kant), 247
Dictionaire Histoorique, 314
Dictionary of National Biography, 133
Dilke, Charles Wentworth, 308
Dilīpa, 297, 299
'Dinakara', Ramdhārī Singh, vii
Dindimus, 116
Diodorus, 80
Diogenes, 204
Dionysios, 92
Dionysus, 39, 49, 50, 53, 79
Discovery of India, 40
Disinterestedness, 13, 33
Divine endowments, 27
Divine fellowship, 189
Domna, Julia, 82
Dow, Alexander, 128, 129, 130, 164, 193, 221, 301
Dowden, Edward, 134, 274, 275
Dress, John, 107, 109, 112, 246, 250, 251, 273, 276, 300, 306
"Droṇaparva", 106
Dryden, John, 120
Dubois, Abbe, 246, 250, 252, 275, 337
Dudley, D.R., 71, 110
Du Perron, Anquitil, 162, 163, 165, 184, 196, 213
Durant, Will, 95, 112
Durgā, 297
Dushyanta, 298
Dutch, 5
Dutta, Dr. B., 44, 107
Duryodhana, 32
Duty for duty's sake, 32
Dvāparayuga, 7, 14

East Indiamen, 192
East India Company, British, 118, 120, 125, 131, 136, 161, 245, 285, 309, 314
Eckhart, Johnann, 102
Eclogue (Virgil's), 170
Eden, Richard, 119
Edinburgh Review, 184
"Education of Nature", 167
Egotism and egoism, 13, 30, 31
Egypt, 41, 45, 46, 51, 59, 78, 85, 115
Egyptians, 43
Ekagarbha, 57
Ekaipodes, 57
Eleatics, 73
Eleatic school of monists, 73
"Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady", 126
Elis, 75, 76
Elizabeth I, Queen, 118
Emanation, doctrine of, 18, 140
Embassy to Ava, 203
Emerson, Ralph Waldo, 4, 37, 59, 68, 262, 275
Eminent Philosophers, Lives of, 67

Empedocles, 73, 76
Endymion, 315, 327, 332
English, 5, 9, 254
English Letters, 157
Enitharmon, 140
Enneades, 87
"Eolian Harp", 222, 223, 224, 225
Epictetus, 78
Epistle VII (of Plato), 62
Epistles of Alexander, the Great, 77
Epithumia, 63
Er, the Pamphilion, 60
Ereenia, 263
Esperanto, 5
"Essay on Heroic Virtue, An", 123
Essays of Elia, 112, 246
Esquimanx, 209
Eternity, 140
Ethiopia, 45
Ethiopian Sacred Letters, 47
Ethiopian sages, 43
Euclid, 43, 203
Eudoxus, 67
Eumolpus, 45
Euphrates, 91
Euripides, 39, 40, 53
European philosophy and philosophers, 59
European scholars, 2, 46
Eusedius, 44, 59, 67, 111
Excursion, The, 162, 163, 213, 395
Exhortations to the Greeks, 86
Ezion Geber, 49

Faerie Queene, The, 150
Fall of Hyperion, The, 315, 319, 322
Fall of Robespieree, ix
Faith, 161
Farista, 129
Fate, 61
Faust, 206
Fearful Symmetry, 136, 156, 275
Ferdinand, 291
Ferio, 71
Field and its knower, 23, 184
Fig Tree, 26
First translation of the *Gītā* in a European tongue, 5
"Firaque", vii
First European translator of the *Gītā*, 9
Fitch, Ralph, 118, 119
Flaxman, John, 150
Flovida, 45, 107
Fontaine, La, 95
Forman, Maurice Buxton, 308, 332, 333
Foster, Georg, 164, 205
Foster, John, 257
"Four Zoas", 151
Frampton, John, 114
Franciscan friars, 105
French, 5, 127, 254, 258
French Revolution, 132
Freyer, John, 121, 134
Friend, The, 204
"Frost at Midnight", 238
Frye, Northrop, 136, 156, 264, 275

Galland, Antoine, 99
Gandharvas, 21
Gandhāra, 42, 51, 82

Gāndhāra art, 74
Gāndhī, Mahanadāsa Karamacanda (Mahātmā Gāndhī), 1, 37
Gāndīva, the bow of Arjuna, 32
Gangā, 254, 284
Gangāvataraṇa (in Wordsworth), 162
Ganges, the, 4, 5, 21, 84, 88, 89, 116, 123, 161, 162, 200, 314, 326
Gangetic plains, 78
Garrod, H.W., 158, 191
Garuda, 20
Gautam, the founder of Nyaya school, 69, 70, 71
Gay, John, 127
Gebirol, Ibn, 104
Geendoveer (i.e. Gandharva), 268
Geetagovinda, 259, 284
Gentoo Laws, 130, 163, 172, 194, 195, 213, 217, 295, 305
Geography (Strabo's), 78, 80, 282
George III, 193, 253
Georgics (Virgil's), 91
German, 3, 5, 94, 254, 258
Germany, 43, 163, 164
Gestes of Alexander, 116
Ghalib, vii
Ghazni, Mahmud, Sultan, 100
Gītāśastra, 1
Glanvill, Joseph, 122
Glasenapp, Noel Helmuth von, 76, 247
Gnosis, 102
Gnostics, 103, 150
Gnosticism, 102
Gobi, 313
Gocaras, 23
God, the sole subject of human attention, 60
God, His attributes, 22
God-realization, 16, 32, 33
Godwin, Mary, 274, 282
Goethe, 153, 155, 164, 205, 206, 207, 246, 248, 301, 302
Golconda, 138
Gold of India, mentioned by Sophocles, 52
Gold-digging ants of India, 54
Golden Years, The, 301
Gonatus, Antigonus, 81
Gordian, the Roman emperor, 84
Gower, 114, 115
Gowen, Herbert H., 73, 110
Great Britain, 106
Great Whore, 143, 144
Greece, 39, 42, 49, 50, and onward
Greco-Indian relationship, 50
Greek ambassadors in ancient India, 77, 78
Greek civilization, 49
Greek experts in ancent India, 53
Greek-knowing kings of Taxila,
"Greek Ode on Astronomy", 222
Greek pantheon,
Greek philosophy, 44, 48
Greek philosopher, 64, 69
Greeks, 39, 40, 42, 44, 45, 49, 51, 58
Greeks in India, The, 108, 303
Griffins in India, 56
Griggs, E.L., 215, 250

Grob, Alan, 158, 191
Gulf of Corninth, 79
Guṇas, 13, 17, 25, 26, 29, 34, 63, 139, 143, 145, 241, 243, 290, 325
Guṇatrayavibhāgayoga, 25, 166
Gymnosophists, 44, 45, 69, 75, 79, 110, 116
Gypsies, 122

Hadrian, 78, 102
Hakluyt, Richard, 119
Halhed, N.H., 129, 130, 163, 164, 172, 193, 195, 213, 217, 295, 221, 305
Hamilton, Alexander (the Sanskritist), 184
Hamilton, Alexander (the interloper), 125
Hand Book of Greek Literature, A
Haree (i.e. Harī), 260
Harmony with the Cosmos, 13
Harul-al-Rashid, 96
Hastings, Warren, viii, 2, 36, 130, 202, 203, 258, 288
Hastināpura, 7
Hauer, J.W., 3
Hawkins, 119
Haydon, Benjamin Robert, 308, 331
Hazar-Afsana, 98
Heathenism, 257
Hebrew, 205
Hecataeus of Miletus, 42, 51
Hellas, 40, 173, 195, 283, 286, 289
Hellenistic world, 81, 82, 102
Hemkoot, 270
Hemrāj, Shīlānand, 6
Henotheistic tendency of the *Purāṇas*, 214
Henotiktontes, 57
Hera, 50
Heracles, 39
Hercules, 79
Herder, J.G., 164, 193, 206, 207, 247, 249
Hermatic Books (in Thebes), 47
Herodotus, 41, 43, 53, 54, 56, 58, 93, 99, 106, 108
Hetu, 70
Hewlett, Dorothy, 316
Higher form of God, 17, 37, 143, 225
Highest Being, 26
Highest Person, 27
Himala, 200, 284
Himālaya, 279, 283, 297, 299
Himālayan, 36
Himālayas, 314
Himānchal Pradesh, 50
Hindisa, 97
Hindoo, 254, 266
Hindoostanish, 278
Hindustan, 193, 213
Hindu and Hindus, 2, 4, 5, 8, 33, 36, 43, 60, 89, 121, 151, 162, 188, 189
Hindu Bible (i.e. the *Gītā*), 160, 161
Hinduism, 68, 190, 193, 201, 274
Hindu Kush, 40, 48, 51
Hindu Manners, 246, 250, 252
Hindu Pantheon, 129, 285, 303, 306, 310

Hindu philosophy and thought, 67, 73, 123, 129, 135, 147, 190
Hindu wisdom, 124
Hindu trinity, 139
Hippolytes, Bishop, 86
Hiram, 49, 108
Hiraṇyagarbha, 18
Hiraṇyamaya Puruṣa, 18
Historia de la Aethiopia, 60
Histoire de la Bhagavadgītā, 5
Historia Ecclesiastica, 44
Historia Novella, 113
Historical Sketches, 259
Histories (of Herodotus), 53
History of Alexander, the Great, 79
History of Hindostan, ix, 128, 130, 188, 213, 216
History of Military Transactions, 128
History of Literature (by Friedrich August Schlegel), 248
History of Persia (by Ktesias), 56
History of Philosophy (by William Enfield), 221
History of the Revolution in the Empire of the Great Mogul,
History of Travayle, 119
History of Western Philosophy, 110
Hitchner, Elizabeth, 274, 278
Hitopadesha, 132, 247
Hodges, 259
Hog, T.J., 278
Hole, Richard, 133
Holy Bible, The, 6, 7, 107, 160, 257
Holy Koran, The, 101
Holwell, J.Z., 128
Homer, 50, 105
Homeric, 49
Homeric Hymns, 49
Horace, 89, 91, 111
Hottentots, 209
Hubert, Paul, 5
Huet, 46
Humanist Without Portfolio, 249
Hume, Robert Ernest, 109, 145, 157, 178, 180, 195, 251, 252, 293, 305
Humbolt, Baron von Karl Wilhelm, 3, 37, 248–49
Hungarian, 5
Huttner, J.C., 207
Hydapses, 313
Hydaspes, 90
Hyderabad, 138
"Hymn to Intellectual Beauty", 131, 287
"Hymn to Lacshmi", 287
"Hymn to Pan", 331
"Hymn to Sereswaty", 287
Hyperboreans, 49, 50
"Hyperion", 315, 324, 325, 326, 328
Hypocrisy, 153
Hypocrites, 155

Iamblichus, 92
Ianthe, 279
Iarchus, 83, 107, 222, 326, 329
Ibn-Batuta, 105
Icthiophagoi, 55
Ida, 137

Ideen Zu einer Philosophie der Natur, 205
Ideen Zur Philosophie der Geschidte, 206, 249
Ignorance, Plato's Concept of, 64, 65
Iliad, 49, 50
Imaus, 283, 314
Immanence of the Godhead, 44
"Immortality Ode", 158–197, 337
Immortality of the soul, 12, 61, 173
Imperishable Absolute Supreme One, 18
Ind, 313
India, 39, 40, 41, 42 and onward
India and the Romantic Imagination, viii, 107, 109, 246, 276, 306
India As Seen By German Philosophers, 247
India in English Literature, 132
India in Greece, 50, 108
Indian, 45, 48, 49, 60 and onward
Indian Antiquities, 302
Indian contigent in the Persian army of Darius, 55
Indian Cane, 55, 126
Indian Canopies, 126
Indian Clove, 315
Indian Caucasus, 280
Indian delegation of philosophers in ancient Athens, engaged in discussion with Socrates, 58, 59
Indian delegation of scholars received by Augustus Caesar, 88
Indian luxuries, favoured by Roman ladies, 89
Indian Maid, 315, 332
Indian mathematics, 97, 101
Indian metaphysics, 288
Indian myths and mythology, 56
Indian pearl, 315
"Indian Philosopher, The", 123
Indian philosophy and philosophers, 48, 59, 60, 106, 148, 179, 200
Indian religion, 200
Indian sages, 43, 69, 80, 101, 189
"Indian Serevade, The", 254, 284
Indian soil, 127
Indian thought, 67
Indian Thought and Its Development, 192
Indian Wisdom, 72, 74, 96, 101, 110, 163, 203
Indians and Germans: 500 Years of Indo-German Contacts, 247
Indica (of Ktesias), 56, 57
Indica (of Arrian), 79
Indica (of Megasthenese), 77, 79
Indica (of Daimachus), 8
Indicopleustes, Cosmos, 105
Indo-Germanic, 3
Indo-Greeks, 40, 80, 82
Indo-Iranian migrations, 48
Indo-Iranian, 48

Indra, 4, 264, 270, 311
Indriyas, 34
Indus-Valley people, 49
Inge, William Ralph, 68, 110
Interesting Historical Events, 128
Intelligences, 317–18
Ionia, 40
Ionic script known to Pāṇini, 40
Iphigenia in Tauris, 82
Iran, 93
Iranians, 93
"Isabella or the Pot of Basil", 315
Iśāvāśyopaniṣad, 146, 157
Islam, 96
Iśvara, 299
Italian, 5, 94, 254
Italy, 59

Jaeger, Werner, 67, 110
Jāgarita, 163
Jahangira, 119, 301
Jain, 76, 206, 209
Jainism, 129
Janaka, the King of Videha, 13, 46, 83
Japan, 126
Jataka tales or Jatakas, 99, 114
Jayadeva, 284
Jebb, R.C., 108
Jeffrey of Teignmouth, Mrs.,
Jerome, 44, 85
Jerusalem, 144, 148
Jesus, 328
Jews, 103
Jhelum, 313
Jīva, Jīvatmā or Jīvātman, 176, 186, 317, 318
Jnāna, 14, 23, 168
Jnānakarmayoga, 14, 168
Jnānavijnānayoga, 16
Jnānayoga, 35
Jnānendriyas, 23
John Marshall in India, 133
John of Monte Corvino, 105
Johnson, Samuel (of the 18th Century), 106
Johnson, Samuel (of the 20th Century), 42, 106
Jones, F.L., 274, 301
Jones, Sir William, 50, 59, 69, 109, 111, 129, 130, 132, 146, 152, 164, 199, 200, 203, 214, 215, 221, 251, 268, 278, 284, 286, 300, 301, 306, 310, 312
Jordanus, 105
Journal of English Literary History (JLH), 217
Journal of Wordsworth Studies, 160
Judaeus, Philo, 104
Juno, 278
Jupiter, 311
Juvenal, 88, 89, 111

Kabalists, 150
Kabīra or Kabīradāsa, 143
Kailāsa, 56
Kailyal, 263
Kālidāsa, vii, 91, 132, 164, 205, 206, 246, 256, 296, 298, 301
Kailag And Damnag, 94
Kalilah and Dimnah, 94
Kalki, 312

Kalanos (Calanos), 69, 74, 80, 204
Kalpa, 271
Kalyāṇananda, 69
Kāma, 13, 14
Kāmadeva, 300
Kamalāsana, 214
Kamandalu, 162
Kaṇada, 71
Kanaka, 96
Kannarese (i.e. Kannada), 82
Kant, Immanuel, 207, 247, 249
Kapila, 9, 21, 73
Kardaja (i.e. Kramajyā), 97
Karma, its meaning and theory, 14, 24, 60, 168, 171, 174, 290
Karmakāndin, 17
Karmasaṁnyāsayoga, 15
Karmayoga, 13, 14, 15, 32, 35, 141, 168, 218
Karmendriyas, 23
Karṇataka, 121
Karpāsa (i.e. Cotton), 55
Kasim, Abdul, 96
Kaśmīra valley, 50
Kaśyapapura, 41, 51
Kathaioi, 55
Kātyāyana-Gṛhyasūtra, 107
Kathopaniṣad, 62, 63, 64, 141, 174, 183
Kauravas, 10, 11
Keats, John, vii, 136, 307–338
Keats-Shelley Journal, 280
Keats: The Religious Sense, 334
Kehama, 260, 269, 270
Keith, A.B., 64, 109
Keynes, Geoffrey, 156
Khan, Shafat Ahmad, 120, 133, 194
Khayyam, Omar, 101, 120
Kinnaras, 26, 57
Kirkpatrick, 314, 333
Kitab el Sindbad, 98
Kizil, Irmak, 78
Knight, G. Wilson, 158, 191, 277, 300, 334
Knidas, 58
Kratu Prajāpati, 65
Krodha, 13
Kṛta or Satyayuga, 254
Kṛtakṛtya, 27
Kṣara, 18, 27, 33, 240
Kṣatriya, 11, 12, 31, 312
Kṣetra, 23, 33
Kṣetrajna, 23, 33, 240
Kṣetra-kṣetrajna-vibhāgayoga, 22
Khristapurāṇa, 118
Ktesias, 56, 57, 58, 93
Kubera, 20
Kublai, Grand, 113
Khan of Tartary, 113
Kulu Valley, 50
Kurukṣetra, 11
Kusumākara, 21
Kūtastha, 27
Kynokephaloi, 57

Lachesis, daughter of Necessity, 60, 61
Laertius, Diogenes, 67, 69, 71, 110
La Fontaine, 95
Lamb, Charles, 99, 198, 226
"Lamia", 326
Lane-Cooper, 161, 192
Lalitavistara, 310

La Revue Philosophique, 5
Latin, 3, 88, 170, 205, 258
Latin authors, 87
Leedes, Thomas, 118
Legacy of India, The, 109, 133
Leifer, W., 247
Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley, 274, 301
Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy, The, 124
Liberation, 15, 19, 30
Library of History, 79
Liby (i.e. Libya), 41
"Life of Alexander" (by Plutarch), 79
Life of Apollonius of Tyana, The, 83, 85, 111, 326, 334
Life of John Keats, A, 316
Life of Shelley, 134
Lights of Canopus, The, 94
Līlāvatī, 98
Lincey, Elizabeth, Ann, 130
Lingaśarīra, 185, 186
Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers, 67, 110
Livingston, John, 213
'Lllewellyn and Gelert', 95
Logan, James, V., 194
Logisticon, 63
Loka, 18
Lokasaṁgraha, 322
London, 6
Longman Modern English Dictionary, 97
Lorinser, 7, 8, 37
Los, 140
Lotus leaf, 15
Lower nature of the Lord, 17, 33, 143, 225
Lowes, J.L., 198, 250, 274
Lucian, 44, 45, 47, 92
Lyrical Ballads, viii
Lux Orientalis, 122
Luxmī, 287
Lydia, 39
Lydian, 52
Macedon or Macedonia, 39, 42, 69, 75, 76, 79, 91
Macdonell, A.A., 8, 10, 37, 38, 299, 305
MacMohan, J.H., 111
Madhusudan Pundit, 120
Madras, 4
Maenad, 282
Magadha, 54, 77
Magas of Cyrene, 81
Magi, 45, 60
Magus, Simonon, 102
Magnus, 44
Mahābhārata, 6, 7, 8, 10, 40, 50, 54, 55, 56, 58, 108, 129, 131, 201, 259, 272, 288, 303
Mahārajah, 277
Mahāpuruṣa-lakṣanāni, 310
Maharṣis, 21
Mahat and Mahat-Brahma, 23, 25
Mahmud, 283
Mahmud Gazni, 2
Maitrī upaniṣad, 65, 66
Malmesbury, William of, 113
Malmonides, 104
Mandeville, Sir John, 133
Manasa, 14, 23, 34
Mānasarovara, 56
Mandodarī, 98
Māndūpyopaniṣad, 162, 163, 213, 222
Mani, 103

Manichalism, 102, 103
Mann, Phyllis, 313
Mansur, 95
Manu, 14, 150
Manusmṛti, 132, 188, 196, 207, 214, 215, 216, 302
Marana, G.P., 124, 125
Marāthī, 118
Marcion, 102
Marco Polo, 105, 113, 114
Marechal, Pierre-Sylvan, 46, 47
Maria Stuart, 299
Marīcī, 9
Mars, 278
Marsden, W., 113
Marriage of Heaven and Hell, 141
Marshall, John, 120, 127, 133, 165
Martrikhora, 57
Maruts, 21
Mary, 144
Mathison, J.K., 158, 191
Maurice, Thomas, ix, 188, 196, 213, 216, 259, 278, 286, 302
Maurya, Chandragupta and Mauryan empire, 77, 81
Māyā, 14, 17, 31, 64, 65, 142, 144, 165, 292
Māyāyoga, 165
Median country, 39
Meditation, 168
Mediterranean world, 81, 87, 103
Medwin, 284
Megalopolis, 81
Megasthanese, 77, 78, 80
Meghadūtam, 50, 297, 298
Memoirs (of Bernier), 127
Menander, 81
Meno, 61, 62, 109
Mesopotamia, 49, 84
Metallurgy, 72
Metempsychosis, 42, 43, 47, 60, 103, 148, 171, 172, 174, 217, 289, 290, 292, 331
Michie, James, 90
Middle Ages, 8, 102, 104, 105, 114
Middle Path, 153
Mignot, 46
Milindpanha, 81
Milton, John, 199, 201, 313, 323
Milton, 137, 138
Mīrā, vii
Miranda, 291
Missionary, The, 278
Modes of Nature, 13, 17, 26, 31, 33, 34, 166
Mohinī Prakṛti, 177, 178
Mohammad, Prophet, 96
Mogul, 118
Mokṣa, 19, 65, 178, 220
Mokṣayoga, 168
Mokṣa-Saṁnyāsa-Yoga, 29
Moneta, 319
Monier-Williams, 72, 110, 130
Monists, 73
"Mont Blanc", 294, 295, 296, 306
Monte Corvino, John of, 105
Monthly Magazine, 132, 135, 159, 332, 335
Monthly Review, 192
Morocco, 105, 266
Mookti (i.e. Mukti), 266
Moors, 89, 90

Moor, Edward, 278, 285, 286, 300, 302
Moorish, 90, 104
More, Henry, 165, 194
Mount Calasay (Mount Kailasa), 268
Mount Meru, 270
Müeller, Max, 130, 212
Muirhead, John, 198, 246
Mukti, 30, 220, 293
Mundakopaniṣad, 62, 175, 182, 221
Munis, 72
Music of the spheres, 42
Muslims, 2
"Musophilus", 184
Mystical and mysticism, 5
Mystic love of India, 51, 68
"My Heart Leaps Up", 170

Nagas, 26, 69
Naimiṣaraṇya, 50
Nakṣatras, twentyseven, 67
Nanda dynasty of Magadha, 77
Nandinī, 299
Nāvada, 9, 142
Nārāyaṇa, 188, 213, 271
Nark (i.e. Naraka), 266
Natī, 206
Natural Historia (Elder Pliny's), 67
Nature, 13, 14, 24, 33, 34, 144, 166, 167, 169, 176, 178, 240, 241, 243
'Nature' and 'nature': the difference between the two in stanza IX of the "Immortality Ode", 167, 186
Naushirvan, Khusro, 94, 99
Nearchus, 74, 77
Nechraei, 45
Negation of the ego, 33
Negative Capability, 330, 331
Nehru, Pt. Jawaharlal, 40
Neil Nāga, 300
Neo-Platonists, 76, 102
Neo-Pythagorean, 82
New Account of East India and Persia, A, 121
New Account of the East Indies, 121, 125
Newbury, John, 118, 119
New England, 4
New History of India, A, 107, 108
New Orleans, 4
"New Testament", 7
Nichmedia, 78
Nicocreon, 75
Nidarśana, 70
Nigamana, 70
"Night Thoughts", 126
Nile, 41, 85
Nirguṇa Bhakta, 22, 23
Niṣadas, 55
Niṣkāmakarma, 327, 328
Niṣtraiguṇya, 33
Niṣtraiguṇyatā, 26
Niyoga, 7
Nobeli, Robert de, 105
North, Sir Thomas, 94
North-South symbolism in William Blake, 149
Norwich, W.T., 254, 301
Numbers, doctrine of, 42
Nysa, 50, 282, 303
Nyāya-school (of Indian philosophy), 69, 70, 72, 73, 129

Oachisrava (i.e. uccaiḥśravas), 201, 272
Oceanus, 324, 325
Octavianus, Gaius Julius, 88
"Ode to Duty", 167
"Ode to the Departing Year", 202
"Ode to the West Wind", 299
Odoric of Pordenone, Friar, 114, 115
Odyssey, 49, 50, 150
Old Testament, 257
Oldenburg, Hermann, 212
"Old Testament", 107, 257
Olympians, 39
"Om, Tat, Sat", 29
Oṁkāra, 21
Omniscience of the soul, 62
"On Astinence", 84, 86
"On a Homeward Journey upon Hearing of the Birth of a Son" (by Coleridge), 173, 195, 216
One Reality, pervading the Universe, 19
Onesicritus, 74, 75, 80
"On Life", 296
"On the Eastern Drama", 164
"On the Malice of Herodotus", 59
Open door to Heathendom, 133
Ophir, 49, 108
Ordinance of Manu, The, 214
Orientals, 39, 40
Oriental learning, 130
Oriental religions, 67
Oriental Religions and Their Relation to Universal Religion, 106
Orientalists, 152, 164, 200, 203, 205, 286
Origen, 86, 103, 104, 174
Original sin, the Concept of, 210
Orme, Robert, 128
Orpheus, 39, 45, 60
Orphic mysticism, 68, 109
Orphism, 68
Osorio, 215
Oupanikhat, 162, 184, 213
Ovington, John, 120, 121
Oxford Classical Dictionary, 88

Pactyica, 41
Padalon (i.e. Pātālaloka), 269
Padma, 214
Padmākara, 208
Padnaens, 55
Pagan, 211, 331
Pahlavi, 94, 98, 114, 205
Palamabron, 139, 140
Palestinian, 59
Pāncāla, 41
Panchatantra, 94, 95, 98, 99, 114, 205
Pāndavas, 10, 11, 142
Pāndu, 7
Pāṇini, 40
Pantaenus, 44, 84, 87
Panthea, 281
Pantheism (Hindu), 104, 199, 205, 209
Parabrahma or Parama Brahma, 23, 24, 29
Paracelsus, 104
Pārada, 104
Paradise Lost, 202, 313

Parallel Lives, 79
Paramātman, 27, 240, 241, 312
Parā Prakṛti, 17, 24, 178, 226
Parāśara, 6
Paris, 5
Parmenides, 73, 76
Parthians, 91, 92, 93
Passion (Rajoguṇa), 14
Passionate, 29
Patna, 77
Pauravas, 39
Pauraṇic geography, 208
Peacock, T.C., 277
Peenda (i.e. Pinda), 267
Pelagus, 51, 52
Penances, 22, 29
Perfection, 6, 13, 31
Pericles, 53
Periggetes, 92
Permenides, 73
Persia and Persian, 2, 39, 54, 57, 80, 85, 93, 94, 279
Persian Plains, 39
Persians, The, 93, 111, 112
Petrarch, 100
Petreeloga (i.e. Pitṛloka), 266
Pforr, Anthonius von, 205
Phaedo, 65, 66, 170, 194, 304
Phaedrus, 63, 148, 170, 194, 304
Pharotes (i.e. Parvateśvara), 83
Phenomenal world, 65
Philadelphus, Ptolemy, 81
Philip II, King of Macedonia, 69
Philosophical Lectures of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 192, 207, 209, 222, 246, 304
Philosophumena, 86
Philosophy of duty, 11
Philostratus, Flavius, 82, 83, 85
Philostratus: The Life of Apollonius of Tyana, 83, 107, 222, 334
Phoenicians, 41
Phoenician sailors, 49
Photius, 56
Phrygia, 39
Picart, 127, 255
Pigmio, 314
Pilpay, 94, 95
Pinto, Vide Sola, 300
Pitṛloka, 148
Pitṛyāna, 148
Plato, 48, 58, 59, 60, 61, 63, 64, 65, 67, 69, 73, 109, 170, 194
Platonic, 171
Pliny, Elder, 67, 110, 313
Plutarch, 56, 76, 79, 80, 313
Pocock, E., 50, 108
Poetical Sketches, 137
Poetical Works of Robert Southey, The, 195, 260, 261, 264, 268, 274, 275, 276
Poetical Works of Wordsworth, The, 192
Polibothra, 77, 78
Polish, 5
Politics (Aristotle's), 41, 70, 106
Polybius, 81
Polyhistor, Alexander, 44
Polyneices, 52
Pontus, 78
Poole, Thomas, 214
Pope, Alexander, 125, 126
Porphyry, 84, 85, 86, 111

Portuguese, 5, 118, 254
Porus, 39, 77, 115
Powers, S.B., 305
Praeparatio Evangelica, 59
Prakṛti, 13, 14, 19, 23, 24, 25, 31, 33, 34, 166, 178, 185, 186, 225, 240, 241
"Prasāda", Jai Śankara, vii
Prasthānatrayī, 1
Pratijnā, 70
Pre-existence, doctrine of, 165, 170
Prelude, The, 167
Pretas, 29
Primal Person, 27
Prime Mover of the Universe, 35
Problems, 72
Prometheus Unbound, 278, 280, 282, 300
Prose Works of William Wordsworth, 195
Providence, 36
Pṛthā, 32
Ptolemeus, Claudius, 86
Ptolemies, 85
Ptolemy, Philadelphus, 81
Ptolemy, Soter, 85, 86
Punarjanma, 291
Punjab, 82
Purāṇa and Purāṇas, 7, 8, 56, 57, 58, 118, 129, 214
Purchas, Samuel, 119
Purchas His Pilgrimage, 119
Puruṣa, 23, 24, 27, 33, 35, 179, 186, 240
Puruṣarthas, 145
Puruṣottama, 35, 240
Puruṣottamayoga, 26, 166
Pyrenees, 103
Pyrrho, 75, 76
Pythagoras, 42, 44, 45, 49, 51, 55, 60, 67, 73, 99, 105, 202, 203, 204, 207, 290
Pythagoras und die Inder, 43, 306
Pythagorean, 66, 68
Pythagoreanism, 68
Pythagorean prohibitions, 43
Pythagorean theorem, 43

Quartet character of the Vedas, 9
Quarterly Review, 248
Queen Victoria, 253
Queen Mab, 279

Raben, Joseph, 280
Rādhākrishnan, Sarvapalli, 36, 142, 157, 242, 251
Rafael (sic) (i.e. Raphael), 146, 147
Rāga, 33
Raghuvanśa, 297
Rahab, 144, 145
"Rainbow", 170
Rājā, 161
Rājapūta, 52, 161
Rajas, 25, 26, 33, 63, 139, 143
Rājasika tyāga, 30
Rājasthana, 52
Rājatarangiṇi, 129
Rajoguṇa, 14, 25, 29, 140
Rajoguṇī, 25, 184
Rājavidyā-Rājaguhyayoga, 19
Rājayoga, 19
Rākṣas, 20, 55
Rāma, 51, 98, 142
Rāmāyaṇa, 8, 53, 55, 58, 98, 108, 112, 254, 259

Rānchi, 6
Rape of the Lock, The, 125
Rasāyanas, 104
Rāvaṇa, 50, 98
Rawlinson, H.G., 60, 96, 109, 133
Raysor, T.M., 158, 191
Razis, 114
Re-birth, 174
Red Sea, 49
Reiman, D.H., 305
Refutation of All Heresies, 86, 111
Reincarnation: A Study of Forgotten Truths, 275
Reincarnation in World Thought, 275
Religious Ceremonies, 255, 256
"Religious Musings", 202, 227, 228, 229, 231
Remorse, The, 215
Renaissance, 131, 134
Renunciation, 15, 29–30
Repression of passions, 154
Republic, The, 60, 61
Reynolds, John Hamilton, 310, 323
Ṛgveda, 9, 10, 129, 175, 329
Rhinoceros, 57
Rhys-Davids, T.W., 212
Ribot, T.A., 5
Riddle of life, 3
"Rime of the Ancient Mariner, The", 236, 238
Rintrah, 139, 140
Ṛka, 10
Road to Xanadu, The, 196, 198, 216, 246, 274, 302
Robinson, F.N., 133
Rock edict, 13th major (of Ashoka), 81
Roe, Thomas, 119
Rogerius, Abraham, 133
Roman empress Julia Domna, 82
Roman gold in ancient India, 88
Roman History (by Dio Cassius), 86, 88
Romantic era or age, vii, 131
Romantic Imagination, The, 191
Rome, 87, 92
Rose, H.J., 82, 110
Rsis, 72
Ṛtusaṁhāra, 302, 305
Rudra and Rudras, 20, 21, 140, 299, 300
Rufus, Quintus Curtius, 77
Ruling Classes of India discerned from a distance through their physical features, 41
Rumi (Jalal al-Din), 102
Runaway, The, 44
Russell, Betrand, 70, 76, 110, 112
Russian, 5
Ryan, Robert M., 323, 324, 334, 335

Saccus, Ammonius, 86
Sacred Books of the East, 212
Sādhibhūta, 18
Sādhidaiva, 18
Sādhiyojna, 18
Saguṇabhakta, 22, 23
Saḥ (i.e. the Soul), 14
Śākatāyana, 65

Śākta, 286
Śakti, 34
Salamis, 93
Śālātura, 40
Saliśuka, King (of the Maurayan dynasty), 81
Salvation, 19, 20, 31
Samadarśitā, 26
Samaneans (i.e. Śramaṇas), 85, 250
Samatvabuddhi, 26
Sāman (i.e. Sāmaveda), 10
Sāmaveda, 20
Samite, 42
Saṁghāta, 23
Saṁkara, 267
Sāṁkhya school, 12, 13, 15, 23, 24, 73, 129, 168, 185, 186, 189
Sāṁkhyakārikā, 179
Saṁkhyayoga, 12, 32, 165
Saṁnyāsa, 15, 30
Saṁnyāsin, 69
Samos, 42, 99
Saṁsāra, 13, 33, 35, 147, 178
Sanaka, 188
Sanandana, 188
Sanatkumāra, 188
Sandrocottus (i.e. Chandragupta), 77
Sanjaya, 11, 12, 32, 259
Sanskrit, 2, 3, 36, 40, 50, 57, 69, 93, 115, 128, 130, 173, 204, 206
Sanskrit love, 121, 128
Sanskrit script, 129
Śantanu, 7
Sarasvatī, 89, 287
Sardis, 52
Śarīrikasūtra, 7
Sassanids (of Persia), 91, 93, 94, 96
Sasrad (i.e. Suśruta), 97
Śāstras, 28, 31
Sat, 23
Satan, 139, 140, 145
Satoguṇa, 24, 29, 140
Satoguṇī, 25, 184
Śathapathabrāhmaṇa, 259
Satī, 125
Satrapi (India as the 20th Satrapi or kṣatrapī of Persia), 54
Sattva, 25, 26, 33, 63, 139, 143
Sāttvika tyāga, 30
Saturn, 325
Satya, 254
Satyavatī, 6, 7
Saurāṣtra, 81
Schlegel, August Wilhelm von, 3, 37, 248
Schlegel, Friedrich, 217, 248
Schlegel Brothers, 164, 207
Schelling, F.W.J. von, 204, 205, 207, 247–8, 249
Schiller, J.C.F., 299
Schleiermacher: Platons Werke, 109
Schneider, Robert L., 158, 191
"Scholar Gypsy, The", 122
Scholastics, 71
School for Scandal, The, 130
Schoolmen of the Middle Ages, 71, 72
Schopenhauer, 184, 196
Schroeder, Leopold von, 43, 47, 306
Schweitzer, Albert, 159, 192
Science of the Śulba, 44, 107
Scoones, William, 157

Scott, Michael, 101
Scylax, 40, 41, 42, 48, 51, 54, 55, 70
Scythia, 45, 93
"Secret Songs" (In Plato perhaps for the *Upanishads*), 66
Seeva (i.e. Shiva), 268
Selected Letters of Tipoo Sultan to Various Functionaries of Europe, 314
Seleucas, 77
Self (i.e. the Universal Spirit), 5, 13, 14, 213, 242
Self-denials, 155
Selfish interest, 13, 36
Self-possessed, 17
Self-possession, 155
Self-realization, 24
Self-restraint, 16
Selincourt, Robert, 192
Sencourt, Robert, 132
Senses, 14, 15, 18, 25, 34
"Sensitive Plant, The", 282, 283, 297, 299
Seringapatam, 314
"Sermon on the Mount", 2
Seville, 102
Shah (in the game of chess), 98
Shahjahan, 122
Shahmat, 98
Shambara, 314
Shankara, 20, 299, 300, 305
Shankarāchārya, 148
Shakespeare, William, 94, 330
Shakuntalā, 164, 206, 207
Shākta, 286
Shakti, 286
Shapur, 96
Sharpe, Eric J., 6
Shataranj, 98
Shavasādhanā, 287
Shelley, P.B., vii, 131, 136, 173, 253, 277–306, 307
Sheshanāga, 214
Sheridan, Richard Brinsley, 130
Shia sect of Muslims, 101
Shiva, 39, 139, 140, 297
Shivapurāṇa, 259
Shivo'ham, 141
Sicily, 59
Siculus, Diodorus, 56, 77, 79
Śiddhantaśiromani, 98
Siddhas, 21, 322
Sifr, 97
Sindha, 82, 96
Sind-hind, 97
Siraj-ud-daula, 309
Sirak (i.e. Charaka), 97
Skanda, 20, 142, 297
Skyey fount, 162
Smith, Nathaniel, 131, 134, 202, 303
Smṛti, 6
Socrates, 44, 58, 59, 67, 68, 71, 204
Soloman, 108
Somerville, William, 127
Song Celestial, 1, 36, 161
"Song of Los", 139
Sonnerat, 259
Sophagsen (i.e. Subhagasena), 81
Sophist, 81
Sophocles, 52, 53
Sotheby, 171
Soul and its attributes, 34, 35, 180, 185, 186, 188

Soul's enslavement, 25
Soul-making, 318
Southey, Robert, viii, ix, 135, 159, 160, 195, 220, 253–276, 332, 336
Sovereign Form of the Lord, 21
Sovereign knowledge, 19
Spanish, 254, 258
Spectator, The (of the 18th Century), 126
Spectator, The (of the 20th Century), 195
Sphines, 80
Spinoza, Baruch, 104, 106, 112, 209, 245, 254
Spirit, 3
Spirit-world, 179
Spiritual orientation, 154
Śrāddha, 226, 267
Śraddhātraya-vibhagayoga, 28
Sri-Aurobindo, vii
Stablemindedness, 34
Stacey, Sophia, 284
Stagira, 42
Stagirite, 42, 70, 73
Stall, J.F., 111
Starlit Dome, The, 191, 300
Stavorinus, 259
Steele, Richard, 126
Stevens, Father, 118
Sthitiprajna, 319
Sthitiprajnatā, 13, 34, 206, 276, 324, 327
Stoic, 44, 78, 87
Story, James, 118
Story of Philosophy, The, 112
Strabo, 50, 75, 77, 78, 80, 282, 303, 313
Stromata, 44, 86
Stutfield, 67, 110
Subrahamanya-bhāratī, vii
Śudras, 31
Sufism, 101
Sufi mystics, 101, 102
Sufi saints, 141
Śūkarāvatāra, 57
Śukasaptati, 99
Śukrāchārya, 9
Śukranīti, 9
Śulbasūtras or Sulbasūtras, 43, 44, 107
Sumeru, 20, 56
Śūnya, 97
Supārā, 49, 108
Suppliant Women, The, 51
Supreme Abode, 270
Supreme Ruler or Supreme Reality (i.e. Krishṇa), 146, 212, 317
Supreme Being (i.e. Krishṇa), 23
Supreme Self, 16, 178
Supreme Soul, 231, 243
Supreme Spirit, 27
Surat, 119, 121
Susa, 79
Suśruta, 97
Suṣupti, 163
Sūtradhāra, 206
Svadharma, 12
Svapna, 163
Svarga, 12
Svarṇabhasma, 104
Śvetāśvataropaniṣad, 10, 61, 175, 176, 178, 293
Swedenborg, ix, 136
Swarga (i.e. Svarga), 257
Swedish, 5
Swift, Jonathan, 123

Syriac, 94
Syrian, 83
Syllogism, forms of, 70, 71
Syllogistic method, 70
Symes, M., 203
Synthesis, 33

Table Talk, 204, 246
Tagore, R.N., vii
Tahkik-i-Hind, 2
Tales of Bidpai, The, 94
Tamas, 26, 33, 63, 139, 144
Tamasika tyāga, 30
Tamils, 89, 117
Tamilnadu, 117
Tamoguṇa, 25, 140
Tamoguṇī, 25, 26, 184
Tanmātras, 23, 185
Tantra and Tantrasādhanā, 286
Tapas, 31
Tapasvin, 17
Ta'rikh al-Hind, 100
Tarpaṇa, 267
Tate, Nahun, 120
'Tattvamasi', 47
Tawny, 73
Taxila, 40, 50, 75, 81, 83
Taylor, Thomas, 195
Teignmouth, Lord, 146, 157
Temple, Sir William, 123, 124
Tevijja, 10
Thales, 73, 203
Tharmos, 139, 145
Thebes, 53
Thelwall, Coleridge's friend, 212, 213, 214, 250
Thersites, 60
"The World is Too Much With Us", 163
Thirteen Principal Upanishads, 109, 157, 193, 196, 305
Thomson, James, 125
Thoreau, Henry David, 4, 37, 59
"Thoughts of Some Brahmins", 206, 247
Thousand Stories, 98
Thrace, 45
Three modes of being, 163
"Three Years She Grew", 167
Thumos, 63
Tibet, 313
Tipoo Sultan, 314
Timaeus, 60
"Tintern Abbey", viii, xv
Tirzah, 145
Transcendentalists, 4
Transcendent Boon, 160
Translations of the *Gītā* in different languages of the world, 5
Transmigration of the Soul, 68, 103, 186
Trayīvidyā, 10
Tree, 184
Tretāyūga, 254
Triguṇa theory, 139, 241
Triguṇātīta, 33
Trilling, Lionel, 158, 182, 191, 196, 246, 310
Trimūrti, 312
Triumph of Loyalty, The, 215
Troy, 326
True action, nature of, 15
True servant of God, 16
True Intellectual System of the World, The, 194
Tulasī, a famous religious plant of India, 315

Tulasīdāsa, vii
Turīyā, 163
Tuṣāṣpa, 81
Turkey, 42, 78, 83
Turkish, 283
Tūtīnāmā, 98, 99
Tyāga, 30
Tyler, M/s and William, 256
Tyre, 49

Uccaiḥśravā, 20, 142
Udāharaṇa, 70
Ujjain, 91
Ultimate Reality, 20, 62, 273, 331
Ultimate Ruler or Source, 4, 20
Umayyad Caliphate, 96
Understanding, its true meaning, 23
Unicorn ass, 57
United States of America, 4
Unity of all Creation, 16
Universal Being, 17
Universal Form, 260
Universal Gītā, The, 6
Universal Self, 242
Unmanifested Form of the Lord, 22
Upānga, 207
Upanaya, 70
Upaniṣad and Upanishads, 1, 8, 10, 61, 63, 64, 67, 68, 69, 73, 101, 102, 128, 165, 175, 176, 178, 183, 184, 190, 222, 289
Upanishadic, 1, 66, 68, 69, 141, 143, 152, 163, 174, 175, 294
Upaknats (i.e. *Upanishads*), 207
Uretta, Friar Luys de, 60
Urizen, 140, 145
Urthona, 145
Uśanā, 9
Uttarkurus, 49, 50

Vāgdevatā, 311
Vaikhanasas, 55
Vairagyaśataka, 134
Vaiśeṣika school, 71, 73
Vala, 144, 151, 152
Valākhilyas, 65
Valle, Pietro Della,
Valentinus, 102
Vālmīki, 8, 53, 108, 112
Vāmadeva, 9
"Vanaparva", 106
Vānaprastha, 55, 72
Vanity of Dogmatizing, 122
Vārāha-Avatāra, 57
Vārāṇasī, 131, 303
Varthuna, Ludovico, 119
Vasco da Gama, 113, 118, 134
Vashiṣṭha, 299
Vāsudeva, 142
Vasus, 20, 21
Vāsuki, 20
Vedānta, 27, 73
Vedāntic, Vedāntin or Vedāntist, 147, 296
Vedānta philosophy, 1, 84, 101, 129, 148, 186, 293, 294
Vedāntasūtra, 87
Veda and Vedas, 4, 7, 8, 10, 13, 22, 26, 27, 93, 139, 188, 189, 311, 321
Vedic Canon, 9, 317
Vedic concept or doctrine, 43

Vedic seers, 311
Vedic teaching, 1
Vegetarianism, 42, 48
Venetian paintings, 146
Vibhūtiyoga, 9, 20, 142, 143, 238
Videha, 46, 47
Vidura, 7
Vidyāpati, 94
Vijainagara empire, 105
Vikramāditya, 91, 129
Vijnāna, 14
Vikāras, 23
Vipāśā, 90
Vipaścit, 62
Virgil, 91, 170
Viṣāda, 168
Viṣādayoga, 164
Visarga, 18
Vishna (i.e. Vishnu), 213
Vishnu, 4, 17, 139, 140, 162, 213, 214, 215, 311, 316
Vishnuloka, 312
Visigoths, 93
Vision of the Last Judgment, The, 146, 147, 152, 156
Viśvatomukha, 259, 260
Viśvarūpadarśanayoga, 21, 148, 160
Vitastā, 313
Vivasvat or Vivasvān, 14, 150, 218
Voyages de Pythagore, 46, 47
Voyage to Suratt, A, 86
Vyāsa, Krishna-Dvaipāyana (Veda-Vyāsa), 3, 6, 7, 9, 32, 36, 142, 219
Vyāsa, Shantikumar Mannoram, 112
Walden, 5
Walker, E.D., 275
Waste Land, The, 254
Watts., Issac, 123, 124
Well-being of mankind, 34
Welsh folk-tale, 95
Westbrook, Harriet, 278
West Indians, 172
Wilford, Francis, 278
Wilkins, Charles, viii, 9 onward
William Blake: Poet and Mystic, 136–37, 156
William, Edward Ellerker, 284
Williams, Jane Mary, 284, 291
William IV, 253
William of Malmsbury, 113
William, Oscar, 191
Wills, Richard, 119
Wilmshurst, W.L., 174, 195
Wilson, H.H., 130, 297, 298
"Windsor Forest", 125
Wisdom, true, 20
Wiseṃen of India, 51
"With a Guitar, To Jane", 291
Wolpert, Stanley, 48, 54, 107, 108
Women of India, well-versed in metaphysics, 80
Wonder that was India, 107
Woodcock, George, 49, 60, 67, 76, 106, 107, 109, 303
Wordsworth, Dorothy, 160, 193, 195, 205
Wordsworth, John, 161, 192, 245, 337
Wordsworth Society, 160
Wordsworth, William, 36, 135, 136, 158, 159, 205, 213, 323, 330, 336, 337

Work without attachment, 15, 22
World of Art and Imagination, 146
World As Will And Idea, The, 196, 251
Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, The, 133
Wordsworthian Criticism, 194

Xenophanes, 73
Xenophon, 58
Xeraxes I, 93

Yajna or yajnas, 18, 180
Yājṇavalkya, 46, 83
Yajurveda, 43, 157, 259
Yajus, 10
Yakṣas, 20, 21, 29
Yamunā, 284
Yarbas, 46, 47
Yavanas, 40, 41
Yavanīlipyi, 40
Yoga, 12, 13, 16, 17, 19, 22, 125, 150, 188, 189, 218, 219
Yoga-Māyā, 14, 34
Yoga-Vidyā, 83
Yogi, definition of the true, 16
Yogin, 16, 17, 125, 219, 319
Yonis, 26, 171
Youna (i.e. Yauvana), 254
Young, Edward, 126
"Yuddhakānda" of Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa*, 53

Zarmanochegas (i.e. Śramaṇācārya), 88
Zendavesta, 93
Zeno of Elea, 73
Zero, its Indian origin, 97
Zeus, 44, 45, 50
Zoa and Zoas, 139, 145
Zodiacs, 151
Zoroaster, 45, 47
Zoroastrians, 311

Bhagavad-Gītā and the English Romantic Movement

Bhagavad-Gītā and the English Romantic Movement—A Study in Influence seeks to fill the need of bringing into limelight the contribution of India to the growth and enrichment of the English Romantic Movement. It establishes that the great 'Romantic Movement' was augmented by what is known as 'la renaissance Orientale' which took place at the end of the eighteenth century as a result of the research conducted by English orientalists such as Charles Wilkins, Sir William Jones, Francis Wilford, N.H. Kindersley, etc. It was represented at its best by the prose translation of the *Gītā* by Charles Wilkins which was published in London in 1785 at the recommendation of Warren Hastings. The present book proves with the help of documented evidence that all the great romantics—Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey, Shelley and Keats, had read Wilkins *Gītā* and imbibed its spirit which found creative expression in their great poems. It is a revolutionary study which provides a new dimension to the evolution of English Romantic poetry by stressing its Indian aspects which have remained hitherto unnoticed but ought to have received due critical attention.

Dr Krishna Gopal Srivastava is Professor of English at the University of Allahabad. He has had a brilliant academic record throughout and has published several books and articles in India, England and America. His two articles on Aristotle's Doctrine of Tragic Catharsis, which appeared in *The British Journal of Aesthetics* (Summer 1972 and Spring 1975 respectively), brought him international fame. His rendering of 'Ode to a Nightingale' stands displayed in the reading room of the Oriental section of the Cambridge University Library.

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